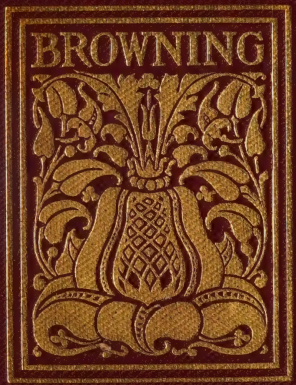

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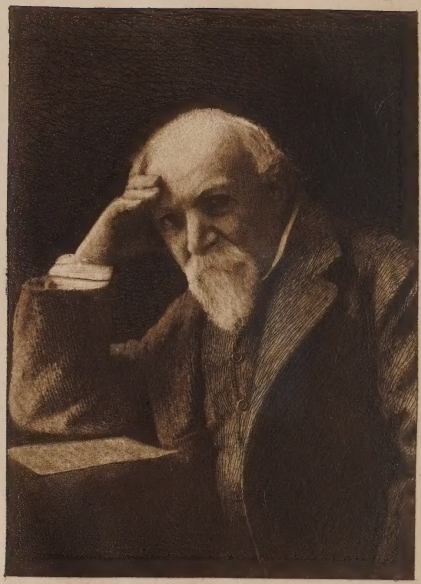
FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

PARLEYING WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

ASOLANDO



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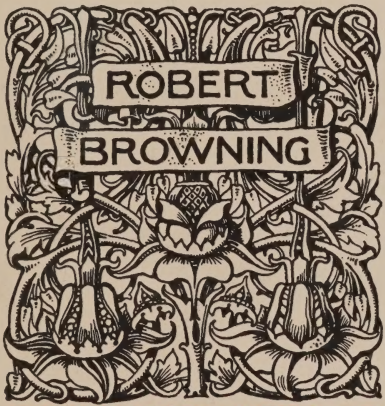

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Complete Works v.12

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

ASOLANDO

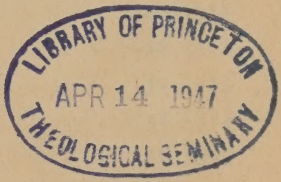
BY

ROBERT BROWNING

From the Author's Revised Text

Edited with Introductions and Notes by

CHARLOTTE PORTER AND HELEN A. CLARKE



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INTRODUCTION.

THE group of poems opening this volume has a peculiar interest for the student of Browning's philosophy of life. In them he deliberately tackles the problems of love versus knowledge, good versus evil, supernatural versus natural revelation, which from the first exerted their spell over his mind, and, indeed, really furnish the backbone of most of his work, though clothed in the flesh of an infinite variety of human manifestations, illustrative of the conflict between these fundamental ideas of human thought.

The conclusions reached in these poems, written only five years before his death, may be taken as his final and direct word on these subjects.

These "Fancies" have been described by Mrs. Orr as having grown out of a fable of Bidpai's, read by Browning when a boy. "This he put into verse, and it then occurred to him to make the poem the beginning of a series, in which the Dervish, who is first introduced as a learner, should reappear in the character of a teacher." Another Oriental book upon which Browning made drafts in these poems is Firdausi's "Shah Nameh," or "Book of Kings," the great epic poem of Persia. Echoes from the "Book of Job" are also evident. But these influences affect

little more than the setting of the poems, and serve to give a Persian atmosphere to the discussion of problems distinctively modern in spirit. Even the fables used in illustration are inventions after the Persian manner by the poet, who himself, in a letter to a friend, warns him against a search for Oriental thought or Oriental sources for the parables, in these words: "I hope and believe that one or two careful readings of the Poem will make its sense clear enough. Above all, pray allow for the Poet's inventiveness in any case, and do not suppose there is more than a thin disguise of a few Persian names and allusions. There was no such person as Ferishtah — the stories are all inventions. . . . The Hebrew quotations are put in for a purpose, as a direct acknowledgment that certain doctrines may be found in the Old Book, which the Concoctors of Novel Schemes of Morality put forth as discoveries of their own."

After the first two poems, which relate how Ferishtah became a Dervish, the "Fancies" deal successively with faith, in "Shah Abbas;" prayer, in "The Family;" the Incarnation, in "The Sun;" the meaning of evil and pain, in "Mihrab Shah;" punishment, present and future, in "A Camel-Driver;" asceticism, in "Two Camels;" thankfulness to the Infinite for benefits received, in "Cherries;" the difference between man's relation to the Infinite and to man, in "Plot-Culture;" the insufficiency of knowledge as contrasted with love in "A Pillar at Sebzevar," and the problem of good and evil, in "A Bean-Stripe: also, Apple-Eating."

In all these the solution comes through realizing fully the value of a relative and emotional point of view in face of an absolute and philosophical point of

view; for example, though philosophically we cannot prove that prayer is answered, the important thing is to have the impulse toward prayer, which is itself a proof that there is an infinite mind to implant the impulse; though philosophically we must believe that evil tends to good, yet as human beings we must follow our impulses to crush out evil, and therefore punish the wrong-doer. Conversely, though we cannot humanly prove that evil tends to good, we are forced to believe in an all-wise God, through whom only good in the long run can come.

As presenting most completely Browning's philosophy in regard to the conception of the Infinite and the relations between Knowledge and Love, "The Sun" and "A Pillar at Sebzevar" are most important.

In "The Sun" the poet reaches the full development of a sun symbolism, hints and previsions of which appear very early in his work.

As far back as "Pauline" he uses the sun as a symbol of the world of all art. The life of the speaker in the poem had not been that of those whose life was lampless save when poesy shone out, —

> "But as a clime where glittering mountain-tops
> And glancing sea and forests steeped in light,
> Give back reflected the far-flashing sun."

Paracelsus speaks of the sun-road, the way of aspiration, and of plants in mines that never saw the sun yet reach toward him; and so men reach toward absolute love and truth.

In this poem the sun becomes a symbol of the infinite unknown reality existent behind the shows of things.

Ferishtah describes how the sun is author of all life

in a manner suggestive of John Fiske's account of cosmic evolution, where he picturesquely terms the resultant universe, differentiated sunshine. But Ferishtah does not stop here; he goes on to the result most important to the human being, the birth of love in his heart. Feeling in himself the power to enjoy all these wondrous creations that emanate from the sun, he must needs send forth thanks and love to the creator of all this joy. This love may not at first seek the source of all good; it, in fact, arrives there by slow degrees, the most obvious creator of joy being the first one loved. Ferishtah eats a palatable fig; there 's love in little. 'T was the gardener gave occasion to his palate's pleasure, and demanded thanks from him; but Ferishtah declares, —

> " Go up above this giver, — step by step,
> Gain a conception of what — (how and why,
> Matters not now) — occasioned him to give,
> Appointed him the gardener of the ground, —
> I mount by just progression slow and sure
> To some prime giver."

This is, packed into a few words, the history of the development of the idea of god. Savage man, for example, worshipped animals which supplied them with food; later they worshipped the corn spirit or the tree spirit, then the sun which ripens the corn.

We get the most complete picture of such a progression step by step back to a prime giver in the Egyptian god Osiris, who was identified as a god of vegetation, a god of the Nile, because most of the blessings the Egyptians enjoyed were discovered to be due to the beneficent overflow of the Nile, and later as a god of the sun, and finally as a spiritual essence; similarly the worship of individual ancestors grew into the worship of a universal father.

When love has been pushed back to the prime giver, then the problem presents itself as to the true nature of this final cause. Ferishtah asks, —

> "Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives,
> And wherefore, so may look for love and praise
> From me, fire 's like so far, however less
> In all beside?"

The answer Ferishtah gives to this problem is characteristic of Browning's attitude toward knowledge and love. He recognizes at once how impossible it is for man to know in its totality the nature of the Infinite, yet he fights against that abstraction of the philosopher described as the unconditioned, a something with no attributes. He argues rather that since man discovers in himself this faculty for giving out love, there must be something in the divine nature to complement this human love, though there be much more than this of which man can gain no conception.

But Ferishtah does not even rest here. The limitations of man's intellect again overwhelm him, and his final decision is that it really makes no difference whether the divine nature has or has not in it love as the human mind realizes love. Man must form his image of divinity according to the dictates of his nature, "receiving good man's way must make man's due acknowledgment" to a god such as he conceives him to be.

But our conception of the divine nature must be pushed back one more step. Our faith is not to rest in the thought that we can confidently think of God as having a love like unto our own, but that in our human love is made manifest, just as in the scent of the flower, the divine power which is in its essence inconceivable, — that God has made us to love as he has made the

flowers to breathe forth a delicious perfume, that in seeking a final source of love we are following out our nature as it has been manifested in us, and our human conception of that source is true relatively to our human needs, though in the largest sense of truth — truth absolute — it is but a symbol of God, as much a symbol as the sun in the poem.

Ferishtah's conclusion that there is, however, immense value to humanity in the attainment of such a conception as that implied in the idea of incarnation, whether actually a fact or not, is entirely in accord with many other passages in Browning, who never bases his faith upon any formulated religious ideal, but upon the *impulse* to form these ideals, which impulse he calls "Love" — meaning by that term the desire to find some ultimate object completely responsive to those human emotions that pour themselves forth in love of the good, the beautiful, and the true.

In thus using the sun as the symbol of the Infinite, Browning has combined, as only a nineteenth-century poet could, all the implications, both scientific and religious, of such a symbol. The scientific doctrine of evolution regards all material phenomena in our system as "unfolded out of the folds" of the once undifferentiated chaotic mass of the sun; behind these phenomena is a persistent energy which no scientist has yet succeeded in explaining in its essence. From this it results that our knowledge is only of phenomena, and therefore relative, while the true reality, the persistent energy, is ever hidden from us. Browning carries on the philosophy of evolution into the spiritual realm, where the sun, once worshipped as actual god, becomes the fitting symbol of the source of the soul.

"Unfolded out of the folds" of human consciousness come all the phenomena of emotion and intellect. Behind these phenomena is the same persistent energy as that behind material phenomena. But man becomes conscious of the directive force of this energy in his desires and aspirations. He looks upon nature, and sees this energy manifesting itself in varying forms, — in minerals, for example, as crystallization; in plants, as the power to grow and reproduce; in animals instincts are added; in man it first, as far as we know, becomes fully conscious of itself, and manifests itself in will, intellect, and human love — for what is will but action born of desire, intellect but knowledge born of desire, love but sympathy born of desire? Doing, knowing, loving, are, then, but the phenomena of the underlying energy which Browning symbolizes as "Love," because love is our highest human experience, and therefore the best symbol of the divine. Doing, knowing, loving, as they partake of the nature of all phenomena, are marked by finiteness, and therefore the will fails of complete doing, the intellect fails of complete knowing, human love fails of complete realization. Did they not fail, moral progress would be at an end; since they do fail, moral perfection is yet to be realized.

Man, though conscious of the movement of the divine energy within him, through the urging power of aspiration, is yet also conscious of the finiteness of his own phenomenal manifestations, and therefore he feels his connection with the divine to be on the side of the consciousness of the moving power within him rather than on the side of intellect.

The intellect fashions merely the form of the object of desire, but it does not give birth to the desire itself;

so it fashions ideals, but desire constantly urges man to transcend these ideals. It is not, therefore, in the results of knowledge, Browning thinks, that we see God face to face, but in the aspiration toward it; hence arises the cardinal doctrine of his gospel, —

> "Let us say — not 'Since we know, we love,'
> But rather 'Since we love, we know enough.'"

This is the conclusion reached in "A Pillar at Sebzevar," where the value of love receives further illustration.

It must always be borne in mind, however, that both "know" and "love" are used by Browning in a special sense. Know stands for knowledge of the absolute, not mere intellectual acquirements; love for aspiration toward that absolute. Knowledge in its relative, intellectual sense the poet always hails as a means through which love may expand and develop.

Though the problems discussed in these poems are subtle, the presentation is so dramatic and the fables told in illustration are so cleverly pointed as to furnish a good example of the fact that in the right hands philosophical dicta may be presented with sufficient artistry to save them from the odium attaching to didacticism.

A further artistic grace is the capping of each Fancy with a dainty Lyric, putting the thought or some facet of it emotionally, while the whole is rounded out by the Epilogue, at once sad and joyous, expressing the fear that all the optimism of the poet's life may be due to his experience of a deep personal love.

The "Parleyings" deal with a variety of themes which the poet is supposed to discuss with divers for-

gotten worthies, though he sometimes forgets to address any remarks to them after first having dragged them forth to furnish a text for his discussion.

In his talk with Bernard de Mandeville he continues the ever-fresh topic of the relations between good and evil, already, one would think, thoroughly treated in the last of "Ferishtah's Fancies." However, though the conclusions are identical with those reached before, it is here presented in a guise sufficiently different to enthrall the attention.

From the ninth stanza to the end is a passage that may be compared with "The Sun" for its suggestion of the double significance of the sun-symbol, its scientific aspect as the cause of cosmic evolution, and its spiritual significance as a symbol of the cause of mental evolution; but in this the thought rolls out in a splendid burst of rich complex music rarely equalled in Browning since the magnificent closing passage of "Paracelsus" describing similar grand processes of nature.

Subtle moral problems, one of love, the other of statecraft, are the central thoughts of "Daniel Bartoli" and "Bubb Dodington." The first has, aside from its moral problem, all the charm of a romantic story; but the second is such a fiendishly clever bit of sarcasm and sophistry combined that it requires one's wits to be at their sharpest to detect all the implications.

The remaining parleys all touch upon some phase of art. The text of the preachment in "Christopher Smart" might be Emerson's saying, "Unless to thought is added will, Apollo is an imbecile." The poet who depends upon sudden inspirations for the direct revealment of beauty will accomplish little for

the good of humanity. To this must be added the will to use these revelations of strength and beauty as a means to an end, rather than to regard them as the end itself of art. "Ears and eyes want so much strength and beauty, and no less nor more, to learn life's lesson by." This chimes in with the opinion given in "The Two Poets of Croisic," that the best poet is he who leads the happiest life, namely, he who has most control over emotional revelations.

In "Francis Furini" a defence of the nude in art grows into a fresh expression of the poet's philosophy that the source of all we need to know is to be found in human consciousness, — a point recognized fully by the psychologist of to-day, but somewhat overlooked in the first burst of evolutionary enthusiasm which, as hinted in the poem, was prone to exalt nature at the expense of man. The argument in "Gerard de Lairesse" is for realism in art as opposed to idealism, humanity being the important thing to study and portray, not mythology and nature. It furnishes a good commentary upon Browning's own work, and shows it was no accident on his part that he did not follow in the footsteps of a Keats or of a Shelley, but consciously and of set purpose eschewed nature-description except as an accompaniment to some larger human theme, as well as the imaginative embellishment of truth with classical drapery. As it has been before pointed out, when he was classic, it was the life, not the myths of Greece that attracted him, except in those few instances where, like Euripides, he made a myth teach. In a delicious spirit of mischief he gives an example, in his description of a "day" in this poem, of what he might have done if he had chosen to make drafts upon imagination, and link nature, as Furini had

done in his pictures, with mythology. Though it is perilously near bombast, there is a wonderful richness and beauty about the passage. The lion is laughing at the Furini kittens, and his laugh touches the splendor of "high seriousness."

The parley "With Charles Avison" is perhaps larger in its signification than the others, because the points discussed in relation to music are applicable to all arts and to life as well.

It has been the fashion to make unfavorable comparisons between "Charles Avison" and "Abt Vogler" as musical poems, but all sober-minded musicians must regard "Charles Avison" as the most penetrating contribution to musical æsthetics ever offered by a poet. In fact, no English poet before Browning has troubled himself with any of the deeper questions relating to music; he has taken his music, as he took his classics, for granted, and his ideas on the subject appear to be developed little beyond those expressed in the Greek tale of Orpheus.

These two poems should really be regarded as supplementary to each other. Music in "Abt Vogler" is presented from the intuitional or artist's point of view, in "Avison" from the empirical or critic's point of view. The critic is apt to have clearer notions of art than the artist himself, unless, like Browning, he combines the two temperaments. So we find in "Avison" the important question is put, "Does mind get knowledge from art's ministry?" a question which is answered in the negative. The artist does not create, according to the true meaning of the word, by making something out of nothing; his faculty merely consists in his imaginative power to shape anew materials already existing. This is a truth unrecog-

nized by Vogler. He is almost a fanatic in his enthusiasm for his own art. Where other arts are bound by laws, his art is the result of divine inspiration. It is easy to understand how a genius in a moment of inspiration might lose sight of the fact that he is but redistributing old material, and might fancy himself in very truth a creator. And, after all, is he so far wrong? Sound, it is true, exists everywhere in the world, and only after centuries of experiment have those sounds been chosen which best suit the purpose of the artist; yet why the harmony of these sounds should give delight, or why they seem to express thoughts and passions too deep for language, is the mystery before which, with the Abbé, we can but "bow the head." With starting tears Vogler regrets that the outpourings of his soul in improvisation may not tarry, but quickly he sees in the ephemeralness of music a symbol of all human aspiration that loses itself in the Infinite.

It is not in the exaltation of rapt improvisation that music is revealed as a symbol of life in "Avison." It is after careful examination of her claims to be the queenliest of the arts, a triumph to which she might attain could she give feeling immortality by sound. But the hitch that balks her of this triumph is just the simple fact that she is subject to the law of change. Though the music of the Abbé might all-express his soul, it would be powerless to rouse aspiration in a later generation. Yet, as the Abbé felt that what once lived should always live, so the critic declares that of all lamentable debts incurred by knowledge, the worst were that he should find his last gain prove his first, futile. Absolute ignorance, merely, instead of knowledge in the bud; and while the music of the Abbé symbolized to him the good that would never be lost,

the expression of joy, hope, and fear in ever-changing musical forms symbolizes to the critic the unfolding of truth through ever-fresh manifestations. With unflinching honesty having laid bare the too often unsuspected truth of the relativity of artistic expression in music, the critic with a fine burst of enthusiasm joins hands with the Abbé when he exclaims, —

> "Never dream
> That what once lived shall ever die! They seem
> Dead — do they? lapsed things lost in limbo? Bring
> Our life to kindle theirs . . ."

Ay. Bring his life to kindle theirs and the critic will be able to claim kinship with the artists of every age. By throwing himself into sympathy with the age which produced a certain form of art, he is enabled to judge of its worth absolutely in regard to its fashioner and his special environment, at the same time that he perceives its worth to be only relative in regard to the great march of evolution.

The Epilogue and Prologue to this series of poems are strong bits of dramatic writing, both touching upon notes struck in the poems, the worth of love and humanity and the relativity of knowledge. "Apollo and the Fates" may be contrasted with the description in "Francis Furini" as an object lesson of the difference between Browning's own way of using a myth and his imitative way of using it.

A special interest will always attach to "Asolando," because it was the poet's last book, published on the day of his death, December 12, 1889. It was an emphatic answer to those who had for some time been regretting the wane of the poet's genius because he had chosen to be rather more profound than is the wont of poets.

There was everything in this little volume, from the daintiest of lyrics like "Summum Bonum" or "A Pearl, a Girl" to a dramatic romance like "Beatrice Signorini" or a monologue like "Imperante Augusto Natus est ——," which has all the directness and force of his earliest poems in this form.

Among the most striking poems are the four called "Bad Dreams." By means of these dreams a brilliant light is flashed upon the lives of the dreamers, whose relation to each other suggests in some vague sort of way George Meredith's sonnet sequence, "Modern Love." The second, especially, has an enticing weirdness, with somewhat the same sort of sulphurous glow as "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." We forget, while we are reading it, that it is only a dream, and follow the dreamer with breathless curiosity into that dreadful chapel with its fiendish priest where came and knelt the wife. Why did he wake before the mystery was fathomed? If dreams are but the phantasms of waking ideas, if they are such stuff as we "are made on," and so index the character, the dreamer must have been a very Othello in his suspicions, a pessimist to whom society was a mass of damnable *seemings*, and the church an exaggerated form of mammon worship, while the light-hearted wife, who does not find the world so uninviting, with that broader faith in humanity which is perhaps woman's special dower, is only amused at the gloomy forebodings of her pessimistic husband.

Perhaps the most beautiful poem of all is "Reverie." It stands as the last exquisite blossom of the poet's philosophy, the seeds of which were sown by Paracelsus, who in his closing speech says, —

> "Love's undoing
> Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
> And what proportion love should hold with power
> In his right constitution; love preceding
> Power, and with much power, always much more love."

This is the dominant note, sounded more or less loudly all through Browning's poetry, power later being confined to God as revealed in nature, while knowledge takes the place of power in man. But in this last wonderful poem the dualistic conception of the two forces which mould life gives place to an exalted monistic conception that Power in its highest manifestation *is* Love. As Paracelsus dies, he says, —

> "If I stoop
> Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
> It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
> Close to my breast; its splendor, soon or late,
> Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day."

It seems in this "Reverie" as if Paracelsus had at last emerged from the dark tremendous sea of cloud, coming forth with strengthened faith. Having known that Power has existed from the first, and believing that with a closer view of life love will be seen as plain, with prophetic vision he exclaims,

> "I know there shall dawn a day
> . . . . .
> If not on the homely earth,
> Then yonder, worlds away,
> Where the strange and new have birth,
> And Power comes full in play."

CHARLOTTE PORTER.
HELEN A. CLARKE.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES.

1884.

"His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious." — Article "Shakespear," JEREMY COLLIER'S *Historical &c. Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 1701.

"You, Sir, I entertain you for one of my Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian: but let them be changed." — *King Lear*, iii. 6.

PROLOGUE.

PRAY, Reader, have you eaten ortolans
Ever in Italy?
Recall how cooks there cook them: for my plan 's
To — Lyre with Spit ally.
They pluck the birds, — some dozen luscious lumps,
Or more or fewer, —
Then roast them, heads by heads and rumps by rumps,
Stuck on a skewer.
But first, — and here 's the point I fain would press, —
Don't think I 'm tattling! —
They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,
— What, 'twixt each fatling?
First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted square:
Then, a strong sage-leaf:
(So we find books with flowers dried here and there
Lest leaf engage leaf.)

First, food — then, piquancy — and last of all
Follows the thirdling:
Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth must bite
Ere reach the birdling.
Now, were there only crust to crunch, you 'd wince:
Unpalatable!
Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent — so 's a quince:
Eat each who 's able!
But through all three bite boldly — lo, the gust!
Flavor — no fixture —
Flies, permeating flesh and leaf and crust
In fine admixture.
So with your meal, my poem: masticate
Sense, sight and song there!
Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
Nothing found wrong there.
Whence springs my illustration who can tell?
— The more surprising
That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice so well
For gormandizing.
A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,
Delightful Gressoney!
Who laughest "Take what is, trust what may be!"
That 's Life's true lesson, — eh?

Maison Delapierre,
Gressoney St. Jean, Val d'Aosta,
September 12, '83.

THE EAGLE.

Dervish — (though yet un-dervished, call him so
No less beforehand: while he drudged our way,
Other his worldly name was: when he wrote
Those versicles we Persians praise him for,
— True fairy-work — Ferishtah grew his style) —
Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,
And noted on a bough a raven's nest
Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak
Widened by want; for way? beneath the tree
Dead lay the mother-bird. "A piteous chance!
How shall they 'scape destruction?" sighed the sage
— Or sage about to be, though simple still.
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped
An eagle downward, and behold he bore
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith
He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.
"Ah, foolish, faithless me!" the observer smiled,
"Who toil and moil to eke out life, when lo
Providence cares for every hungry mouth!"
To profit by which lesson, home went he,
And certain days sat musing, — neither meat
Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.
Then, — for his head swam and his limbs grew faint, —
Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream
God thus admonished: "Hast thou marked my deed?
Which part assigned by providence dost judge
Was meant for man's example? Should he play
The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength
That captures prey and saves the perishing?
Sluggard, arise: work, eat, then feed who lack!"

Waking, "I have arisen, work I will,
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,
Body or soul in me? I starve in soul:
So may mankind: and since men congregate
In towns, not woods, — to Ispahan forthwith!"

Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
Underfoot the moss-tracks, — life and love with these!
I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers:
All the long lone Summer-day, that greenwood life of ours!

Rich-pavilioned, rather, — still the world without, —
Inside — gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about!
Queen it thou on purple, — I, at watch and ward
Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love's guard!

So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me!
Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we!
Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face!
God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls should souls have place.

THE MELON-SELLER.

Going his rounds one day in Ispahan, —
Half-way on Dervishhood, not wholly there, —
Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,
Came startled on a well-remembered face.
"Can it be? What, turned melon-seller — thou?
Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon step
Where dogs brush by thee and express contempt?
Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-out gourd!

Nay, sunk to slicing up, for readier sale,
One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a swine? 10
Wast thou the Shah's Prime Minister, men saw
Ride on his right-hand while a trumpet blew
And Persia hailed the Favorite? Yea, twelve years
Are past, I judge, since that transcendency,
And thou didst peculate and art abased;
No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold in hand
Persia, couldst halve and quarter, mince its pulp
As pleased thee, and distribute — melon-like —
Portions to whoso played the parasite,
Or suck — thyself — each juicy morsel. How 20
Enormous thy abjection, — hell from heaven,
Made tenfold hell by contrast! Whisper me!
Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years' bliss
Only to prove this day's the direr lot?"
Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once more
Luminous and imperial, from the rags.
"Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints
A day of woe to the unworthy one,
Than that the unworthy one, by God's award, 30
Tasted joy twelve years long? Or buy a slice,
Or go to school!"

To school Ferishtah went;
And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan
To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above
— Where they dig turquoise: there kept school himself,
The melon-seller's speech, his stock in trade.
Some say a certain Jew adduced the word
Out of their book, it sounds so much the same,
את־הטוב נקבל מאת האלהים
ואת־הרע לא נקבל: In Persian phrase, 40

"Shall we receive good at the hand of God
And evil not receive?" But great wits jump.

Wish no word unspoken, want no look away!
What if words were but mistake, and looks — too sudden, say!
Be unjust for once, Love! Bear it — well I may!

Do me justice always? Bid my heart — their shrine —
Render back its store of gifts, old looks and words of thine
— Oh, so all unjust — the less deserved, the more divine?

SHAH ABBAS.

Anyhow, once full Dervish, youngsters came
To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock
Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.

Said some one, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,
Reading a certain passage from the roll
Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life:
"Master, explain this incongruity!
When I dared question 'It is beautiful,
But is it true?' — thy answer was 'In truth
Lives beauty.' I persisting — 'Beauty — yes,
In thy mind and in my mind, every mind
That apprehends: but outside — so to speak —
Did beauty live in deed as well as word,
Was this life lived, was this death died — not dreamed?'
'Many attested it for fact' saidst thou.
'Many!' but mark, Sir! Half as long ago
As such things were, — supposing that they were, —

Reigned great Shah Abbas : he too lived and died
— How say they ? Why, so strong of arm, of foot
So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap
On a stag's haunch, — with one hand grasped the stag,
With one struck down the lion : yet, no less,
Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,
Perceived a spider drop into his wine,
Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear.
So all say, — so dost thou say ?"

"Wherefore not ?"
Ferishtah smiled : "though strange, the story stands
Clear-chronicled : none tells it otherwise :
The fact's eye-witness bore the cup, beside."

"And dost thou credit one cup-bearer's tale,
False, very like, and futile certainly,
Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues
Combine to testify was beautiful
In deed as well as word ? No fool's report
Of lion, stag and spider, but immense
With meaning for mankind, — thy race, — thyself ?"

Whereto the Dervish : "First amend, my son,
Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief
Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name
The easy acquiescence of mankind
In matters nowise worth dispute, since life
Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo —
That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed
The fact for us that somewhen Abbas reigned,
Died, somehow slain, — a useful registry, —
Which therefore we — 'believe' ? Stand forward, thou,
My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal !

I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah
Happily regnant, hath become assured,
By opportune discovery, that thy sires,
Son by the father upwards, track their line
To — whom but that same bearer of the cup
Whose inadvertency was chargeable
With what therefrom ensued, disgust and death
To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul?
Whence he appoints thee, — such his clemency, —
Not death, thy due, but just a double tax
To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds
Which flower into the brush that makes a broom
Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure,
Thou dost believe the story nor dispute
That punishment should signalize its truth?
Down therefore with some twelve dinars! Why start,
— The stag's way with the lion hard on haunch?
'Believe the story?' — how thy words throng fast! —
'Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote down this,
That and the other circumstance to prove
So great a prodigy surprised the world?
Needs must thou prove me fable can be fact
Or ere thou coax one piece from out my pouch!'"

"There we agree, Sir: neither of us knows,
Neither accepts that tale on evidence
Worthy to warrant the large word — belief.
Now I get near thee! Why didst pause abrupt,
Disabled by emotion at a tale
Might match — be frank! — for credibility
The figment of the spider and the cup?
— To wit, thy roll's concerning Ali's life,
Unevidenced — thine own word! Little boots
Our sympathy with fiction! When I read

The annals and consider of Tahmasp
And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love,
I weep like a cut vine-twig, though aware
Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake
He saw devour her, — how could such exist,
Having nine heads? No snake boasts more than three!
I weep, then laugh — both actions right alike.
But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,
When at the Day of Judgment God shall ask
'Didst thou believe?' — what wilt thou plead? Thy tears?
(Nay, they fell fast and stain the parchment still)
What if thy tears meant love? Love lacking ground
— Belief, — avails thee as it would avail
My own pretence to favor since, forsooth,
I loved the lady — I, who needs must laugh
To hear a snake boasts nine heads: they have three!"

"Thanks for the well-timed help that's born, behold,
Out of thy words, my son, — belief and love!
Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal? Ay,
The very same we heard of, ten years since,
Slain in the wars: he comes back safe and sound, —
Though twenty soldiers saw him die at Yezdt, —
Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy
Declared 't was like he some day would, — for why?
The twenty soldiers lied, he saw him stout,
Cured of all wounds at once by smear of salve,
A Mubid's manufacture: such the tale.
Now, when his pair of sons were thus apprised
Effect was twofold on them. 'Hail!' crowed This:
'Dearer the news than dayspring after night!
The cure-reporting youngster warrants me
Our father shall make glad our eyes once more,

For whom, had outpoured life of mine sufficed
To bring him back, free broached were every vein!'
'Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news
Cruel as meteor simulating dawn!'
Whimpered the other: 'Who believes this boy
Must disbelieve his twenty seniors: no,
Return our father shall not! Might my death
Purchase his life, how promptly would the dole
Be paid as due!' Well, ten years pass, — aha,
Ishak is marching homeward, — doubts, not he,
Are dead and done with! So, our townsfolk straight
Must take on them to counsel. 'Go thou gay,
Welcome thy father, thou of ready faith!
Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one,
Expect paternal frowning, blame and blows!'
So do our townsfolk counsel: dost demur?"

"Ferishtah like those simpletons — at loss
In what is plain as pikestaff? Pish! Suppose
The trustful son had sighed 'So much the worse!
Returning means — retaking heritage
Enjoyed these ten years, who should say me nay?'
How would such trust reward him? Trustlessness
— O' the other hand — were what procured most praise
To him who judged return impossible,
Yet hated heritage procured thereby.
A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize
Mere head's work less than heart's work: no fool he!'

"Is God less wise? Resume the roll!" They did.

You groped your way across my room i' the dear dark
dead of night;
At each fresh step a stumble was: but, once your
lamp alight,

Easy and plain you walked again: so soon all wrong
grew right!

What lay on floor to trip your foot? Each object,
late awry,
Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to footing free
— for why?
The lamp showed all, discordant late, grown simple
symmetry.

Be love your light and trust your guide, with these ex-
plore my heart!
No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and souls
apart!
Since rooms and hearts are furnished so, — light shows
you, — needs love start?

THE FAMILY.

A CERTAIN neighbor lying sick to death,
Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree, whence
He rose at peace: whereat objected one
"Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.
Sure, thou art ignorant how close at hand
Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled so late
Thy face, had deepened down not lightened off."

"I judge there will be respite, for I prayed."

"Sir, let me understand, of charity!
Yestereve, what was thine admonishment?
'All-wise, all-good, all-mighty — God is such!'
How then should man, the all-unworthy, dare

Propose to set aside a thing ordained?
To pray means — substitute man's will for God's:
Two best wills cannot be: by consequence,
What is man bound to but — assent, say I?
Rather to rapture of thanksgiving; since
That which seems worst to man to God is best,
So, because God ordains it, best to man.
Yet man — the foolish, weak and wicked — prays!
Urges 'My best were better, didst Thou know'!"

"List to a tale. A worthy householder
Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse
Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit, whereon
The offended limb swelled black from foot to fork.
The husband called in aid a leech renowned
World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,
And bade him dictate — who forthwith declared
'Sole remedy is amputation.' Straight
The husband sighed 'Thou knowest: be it so!'
His three sons heard their mother sentenced: 'Pause!'
Outbroke the elder: 'Be precipitate
Nowise, I pray thee! Take some gentler way,
Thou sage of much resource! I will not doubt
But science still may save foot, leg and thigh!'
The next in age snapped petulant: 'Too rash!
No reason for this maiming! What, Sir Leech,
Our parent limps henceforward while we leap?
Shame on thee! Save the limb thou must and shalt!'
'Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones!' followed up
The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest too:
'The leech knows all things, we are ignorant;
What he proposes, gratefully accept!
For me, had I some unguent bound to heal
Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare

Essay its virtue and so cross the sage
By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick!
No waiting longer! There the patient lies:
Out then with implements and operate!' ''

"Ah, the young devil!''

"Why, his reason chimed
Right with the Hakim's.''

"Hakim's, ay — but chit's?
How? what the skilled eye saw and judged of weight
To overbear a heavy consequence,
That — shall a sciolist affect to see?
All he saw — that is, all such oaf should see,
Was just the mother's suffering.''

"In my tale,
Be God the Hakim: in the husband's case,
Call ready acquiescence — aptitude
Angelic, understanding swift and sure:
Call the first son — a wise humanity,
Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt:
See in the second son — humanity,
Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but kind.
Last comes the cackler of the brood, our chit
Who, aping wisdom all beyond his years,
Thinks to discard humanity itself:
Fares like the beast which should affect to fly
Because a bird with wings may spurn the ground,
So, missing heaven and losing earth — drops how
But hell-ward? No, be man and nothing more —
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves, and loathes,

And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes
And show God granted most, denying all."

Man I am and man would be, Love — merest man
and nothing more.
Bid me seem no other! Eagles boast of pinions — let
them soar!
I may put forth angel's plumage, once unmanned, but
not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices, — nay, if kneeling
serves, to kneel:
Here you front me, here I find the all of heaven that
earth can feel:
Sense looks straight, — not over, under, — perfect sees
beyond appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle: what to me were
more outside?
Wiser wisdom, better goodness? Ah, such want the
angel's wide
Sense to take and hold and keep them! Mine at least
has never tried.

THE SUN.

"And what might that bold man's announcement
be" —
Ferishtah questioned — "which so moved thine ire
That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick — in short,
Confute the announcer? Wipe those drops away
Which start afresh upon thy face at mere
Mention of such enormity: now, speak!"

"He scrupled not to say — (thou warrantest,
O patient Sir, that I unblamed repeat
Abominable words which blister tongue?)
God once assumed on earth a human shape:
(Lo, I have spitten!) Dared I ask the grace,
Fain would I hear, of thy subtility,
From out what hole in man's corrupted heart
Creeps such a maggot: fancies verminous
Breed in the clots there, but a monster born
Of pride and folly like this pest — thyself
Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath chipped."

The sun rode high. "During our ignorance" —
Began Ferishtah — "folk esteemed as God
Yon orb: for argument, suppose him so, —
Be it the symbol, not the symbolized,
I and thou safelier take upon our lips.
Accordingly, yon orb that we adore
— What is he? Author of all light and life:
Such one must needs be somewhere: this is he.
Like what? If I may trust my human eyes,
A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence springs
— What, from this ball, my arms could circle round?
All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,
Inspiring me with — what? Why, love and praise.
I eat a palatable fig — there 's love
In little: who first planted what I pluck,
Obtains my little praise, too: more of both
Keeps due proportion with more cause for each:
So, more and ever more, till most of all
Completes experience, and the orb, descried
Ultimate giver of all good, perforce
Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,
Is worshipped — which means loved and praised at height.

Back to the first good : 't was the gardener gave
Occasion to my palate's pleasure : grace,
Plain on his part, demanded thanks on mine.
Go up above this giver, — step by step,
Gain a conception of what — (how and why,
Matters not now) — occasioned him to give,
Appointed him the gardener of the ground, —
I mount by just progression slow and sure
To some prime giver — here assumed yon orb —
Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,
Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like
Howe'er above me ? Man, I say — how else,
I being man who worship ? Here 's my hand
Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on weight
Greater and ever greater, till at last
It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops —
Hand-strength expended wholly : so, my love
First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift,
Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still more,
Who hires the ground, who owns the ground, Sheikh, Shah,
On and away, away and ever on,
Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb
Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.
Where is the break, the change of quality
In hand's power, soul's impulsion ? Gift was grace,
The greatest as the smallest. Had I stopped
Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and praise
As so far only fit to follow gift,
Saying 'I thanked the gardener for his fig,
But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my purse
With tomans which avail to purchase me
A fig-tree forest, shall I pay the same
With love and praise, the gardener's proper fee ? '

Justly would whoso bears a brain object
'Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,
Do thou thine own part, therefore: let the Shah
Ask more from who has more to pay.' Perchance
He gave me from his treasure less by much
Than the soil's servant: let that be! My part
Is plain — to meet and match the gift and gift
With love and love, with praise and praise, till both
Cry 'All of us is thine, we can no more!'
So shall I do man's utmost — man to man:
For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate
Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,
So must I count that orb I call a fire
(Keep to the language of our ignorance)
Something that's fire and more beside. Mere fire
— Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives,
And wherefore, so may look for love and praise
From me, fire's like so far, however less
In all beside? Prime cause this fire shall be,
Uncaused, all-causing: hence begin the gifts,
Thither must go my love and praise — to what?
Fire? Symbol fitly serves the symbolized
Herein, — that this same object of my thanks,
While to my mind nowise conceivable
Except as mind no less than fire, refutes
Next moment mind's conception: fire is fire —
While what I needs must thank, must needs include
Purpose with power, — humanity like mine,
Imagined, for the dear necessity,
One moment in an object which the next
Confesses unimaginable. Power!
— What need of will, then? naught opposes power:
Why, purpose? any change must be for worse:

And what occasion for beneficence
When all that is, so is and so must be ?
Best being best now, change were for the worse.
Accordingly discard these qualities
Proper to imperfection, take for type
Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb, —
The perfect and, so, inconceivable, —
And what remains to love and praise ? A stone
Fair-colored proves a solace to my eye,
Rolled by my tongue brings moisture curing drouth,
And struck by steel emits a useful spark :
Shall I return it thanks, the insentient thing ?
No, — man once, man forever — man in soul
As man in body : just as this can use
Its proper senses only, see and hear,
Taste, like or loathe according to its law
And not another creature's, — even so
Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn
Must move, is kindred soul : receiving good
— Man's way — must make man's due acknowledgment,
No other, even while he reasons out
Plainly enough that, were the man unmanned,
Made angel of, angelic every way,
The love and praise that rightly seek and find
Their man-like object now, — instructed more,
Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.
Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers scent
Though reason prove the sun lacks nose to feed
On what himself made grateful : flower and man,
Let each assume that scent and love alike
Being once born, must needs have use ! Man's part
Is plain — to send love forth, — astray, perhaps :
No matter, he has done his part."

" Wherefrom
What is to follow — if I take thy sense —
But that the sun — the inconceivable
Confessed by man — comprises, all the same,
Man's every-day conception of himself —
No less remaining unconceived ! "

" Agreed ! "

" Yet thou, insisting on the right of man
To feel as man, not otherwise, — man, bound
By man's conditions neither less nor more,
Obliged to estimate as fair or foul,
Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty
Adjudges such, — how canst thou, — plainly bound
To take man's truth for truth and only truth, —
Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth
Falsehood confessed ? Flesh simulating fire —
Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know
For dust — instinct with fire unknowable !
Where 's thy man-needed truth — its proof, nay print
Of faintest passage on the tablets traced
By man, termed knowledge ? 'T is conceded thee,
We lack such fancied union — fire with flesh :
But even so, to lack is not to gain
Our lack's suppliance : where 's the trace of such
Recorded ? "

" What if such a tracing were ?
If some strange story stood, — whate'er its worth, —
That the immensely yearned-for, once befell,
— The sun was flesh once ? — (keep the figure !) "

" How ?
An union inconceivable was fact ? "

"Son, if the stranger have convinced himself
Fancy is fact — the sun, besides a fire,
Holds earthly substance somehow fire pervades
And yet consumes not, — earth, he understands,
With essence he remains a stranger to, —
Fitlier thou saidst 'I stand appalled before
Conception unattainable by me
Who need it most' — than this — 'What? boast he holds
Conviction where I see conviction's need,
Alas, — and nothing else? then what remains
But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the fool!'"

Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes,
Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy shapes
Some befitting cradle where the babe had birth —
Wholly heaven's the product, unallied to earth.
Splendors recognized as perfect in the star! —
In our flint their home was, housed as now they are.

MIHRAB SHAH.

Quoth an inquirer, "Praise the Merciful!
My thumb which yesterday a scorpion nipped —
(It swelled and blackened) — lo, is sound again!
By application of a virtuous root
The burning has abated: that is well:
But now methinks I have a mind to ask, —
Since this discomfort came of culling herbs
Nor meaning harm, — why needs a scorpion be?
Yea, there began, from when my thumb last throbbed,
Advance in question framing, till I asked
Wherefore should any evil hap to man —

From ache of flesh to agony of soul —
Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency?
Nay, why permits He evil to Himself —
Man's sin, accounted such? Suppose a world
Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant —
Man pure of evil in thought, word and deed —
Were it not well? Then, wherefore otherwise?
Too good result? But He is wholly good!
Hard to effect? Ay, were He impotent!
Teach me, Ferishtah!"

Said the Dervish: "Friend,
My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than thine:
I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,
Which never tumbled but stuck fast on neck.
Was not I glad and thankful!"

"How could head
Tumble from neck, unchopped — inform me first!
Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,
Who ever heard the like?"

"The like might hap
By natural law: I let my staff fall thus —
It goes to ground, I know not why. Suppose,
Whene'er my hold was loosed, it skyward sprang
As certainly, and all experience proved
That, just as staves when unsupported sink,
So, unconfined, they soar?"

"Let such be law —
Why, a new chapter of sad accidents
Were added to humanity's mischance,
No doubt at all, and as a man's false step

Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,
Removal from his shoulder of a weight
Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay!
But, since such law exists in just thy brain,
I shall not hesitate to doff my cap
For fear my head take flight."

"Nor feel relief
Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me, now!
What were the bond 'twixt man and man, dost judge,
Pain once abolished? Come, be true! Our Shah —
How stands he in thy favor? Why that shrug?
Is not he lord and ruler?"

"Easily!
His mother bore him, first of those four wives
Provided by his father, such his luck:
Since when his business simply was to breathe
And take each day's new bounty. There he stands —
Where else had I stood, were his birth-star mine?
No, to respect men's power, I needs must see
Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and wield the sword
Nobody else can brandish! Bless his heart,
'T is said, he scarcely counts his fingers right!"

"Well, then — his princely doles! from every feast
Off go the feasted with the dish they ate
And cup they drank from, — nay, a change besides
Of garments" . . .

"Sir, put case, for service done, —
Or best, for love's sake, — such and such a slave
Sold his allowance of sour lentil soup
To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick, — nay,

If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep
To clout my shoe, — that were a sacrifice ! ”

“ All praise his gracious bearing.”

“ All praise mine —
Or would praise did they never make approach
Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade
‘ Now that with eyelids thou hast touched the earth,
Come close and have no fear, poor nothingness ! ’
What wonder that the lady-rose I woo
And palisade about from every wind,
Holds herself handsomely ? The wilding, now,
Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast,
That still lifts up with something of a smile
Its poor attempt at bloom ” . . .

“ A blameless life,
Where wrong might revel with impunity —
Remember that ! ”

“ The falcon on his fist —
Reclaimed and trained and belled and beautified
Till she believes herself the Simorgh’s match —
She only deigns destroy the antelope,
Stoops at no carrion-crow : thou marvellest ? ”

“ So be it, then ! He wakes no love in thee
For any one of divers attributes
Commonly deemed loveworthy. All the same,
I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,
With that internal ulcer ” . . .

“ Say’st thou so ?
How should I guess ? Alack, poor soul ! But stay —
Sure in the reach of art some remedy

Must lie to hand : or if it lurk, — that leech
Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid ?
Couldst not thou, Dervish, counsel in the case ? ''

" My counsel might be — what imports a pang
The more or less, which puts an end to one
Odious in spite of every attribute
Commonly deemed loveworthy ? ''
" Attributes ?
Faugh ! — nay, Ferishtah, — 't is an ulcer, think !
Attributes, quotha ? Here 's poor flesh and blood,
Like thine and mine and every man's, a prey
To hell-fire ! Hast thou lost thy wits for once ? ''

" Friend, here they are to find and profit by !
Put pain from out the world, what room were left
For thanks to God, for love to Man ? Why thanks, —
Except for some escape, whate'er the style,
From pain that might be, name it as thou mayst ?
Why love, — when all thy kind, save me, suppose,
Thy father, and thy son, and . . . well, thy dog,
To eke the decent number out — we few
Who happen — like a handful of chance stars
From the unnumbered host — to shine o'erhead
And lend thee light, — our twinkle all thy store, —
We only take thy love ! Mankind, forsooth ?
Who sympathizes with their general joy
Foolish as undeserved ? But pain — see God's
Wisdom at work ! — man's heart is made to judge
Pain deserved nowhere by the common flesh
Our birthright, — bad and good deserve alike
No pain, to human apprehension ! Lust,
Greed, cruelty, injustice, crave (we hold)
Due punishment from somebody, no doubt :

But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh
Triumphant from the bar whereto arraigned
Soul quakes with reason. In the eye of God
Pain may have purpose and be justified:
Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,
A hateful chance no man but would avert
Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to God
And love to man, — from man take these away,
And what is man worth? Therefore, Mihrab Shah,
Tax me my bread and salt twice over, claim
Laila my daughter for thy sport, — go on!
Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry
Beats mine, — thou meritest a dozen deaths!
But — ulcer in the stomach, — ah, poor soul,
Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!"

So, the head aches and the limbs are faint!
Flesh is a burthen — even to you!
Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?
Why are my ailments none or few?

In the soul of me sits sluggishness:
Body so strong and will so weak!
The slave stands fit for the labor — yes,
But the master's mandate is still to seek.

You, now — what if the outside clay
Helped, not hindered the inside flame?
My dim to-morrow — your plain to-day,
Yours the achievement, mine the aim?

So were it rightly, so shall it be!
Only, while earth we pace together
For the purpose apportioned you and me,
Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh "Wait for his sluggish soul!
Shame he should lag, not lamed as I!"
May not I smile "Ungained her goal:
Body may reach her — by-and-by?"

A CAMEL-DRIVER.

"How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-guide
Condemned" (Ferishtah questioned), "for he slew
The merchant whom he convoyed with his bales
— A special treachery?"

"Sir, the proofs were plain:
Justice was satisfied: between two boards
The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly served."

"With all wise men's approval — mine at least."

"Himself, indeed, confessed as much. 'I die
Justly' (groaned he) 'through over-greediness
Which tempted me to rob: but grieve the most
That he who quickened sin at slumber, — ay,
Prompted and pestered me till thought grew deed, —
The same is fled to Syria and is safe,
Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.
My comfort is that God reserves for him
Hell's hottest' . . ."

"Idle words."

"Enlighten me!
Wherefore so idle? Punishment by man
Has thy assent, — the word is on thy lips.
By parity of reason, punishment
By God should likelier win thy thanks and praise."

"Man acts as man must: God, as God beseems.
A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,
Thumps her athwart the muzzle: why?"

"How else
Instruct the creature — mouths should munch, not bite?"

"True, he is man, knows but man's trick to teach.
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,
Had hindered any biting?"

"Find him such,
And fit the beast with understanding first!
No understanding animals like Rakhsh
Nowadays, Master! Till they breed on earth,
For teaching — blows must serve."

"Who deals the blow —
What if by some rare method, — magic, say, —
He saw into the biter's very soul,
And knew the fault was so repented of
It could not happen twice?"

"That's something: still,
I hear, methinks, the driver say 'No less
Take thy fault's due! Those long-necked sisters, see,
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets
Punishment or enjoys impunity.
For their sakes — thwack!'"

"The journey home at end,
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong
Suffered from six months since, — apparently
With patience, nay, approval: when the jaws

Met i' the small of the arm, 'Ha, Ladykin,
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold?' laughed he:
'Eat flesh? Rye-grass content thee rather with,
Whereof accept a bundle!' Now, — what change!
Laughter by no means! Now 't is 'Fiend, thy frisk
Was fit to find thee provender, didst judge?
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick
To hiss i' the soft of thee!'"

"Behold? behold
A crazy noddle, rather! Sure the brute
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed out of tongue,
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself
At such mad outrage. 'Could I take thy mind,
Guess thy desire? If biting was offence
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each day's
Patting and petting, but to intimate
My playsomeness had pleased thee? Thou endowed
With reason, truly!'"

"Reason aims to raise
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway, whence
Man dares, for life's brief moment, peer below:
But ape omniscience? Nay! The ladder lent
To climb by, step and step, until we reach
The little foothold-rise allowed mankind
To mount on and thence guess the sun's survey —
Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth
Stretched for the sun's descrying? Reason bids
'Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all
Or last of all, with blows if blows must be, —
How else accomplish teaching?' Reason adds
'Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,
God operated and will operate.'

— Process of which man merely knows this much, —
That nowise it resembles man's at all,
Teaching or punishing."

"It follows, then,
That any malefactor I would smite
With God's allowance, God himself will spare
Presumably. No scapegrace? Then, rejoice
Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria!"

"Friend, such view
Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.
Man lumps his kind i' the mass: God singles thence
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist —
So think! — for certain: think the mass — mankind —
Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone!
Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee, —
Thee and no other, — stand or fall by them!
That is the part for thee: regard all else
For what it may be — Time's illusion. This
Be sure of — ignorance that sins, is safe.
No punishment like knowledge! Instance, now!
My father's choicest treasure was a book
Wherein he, day by day and year by year,
Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake
When I should grow to manhood. While a child,
Coming upon the casket where it lay
Unguarded, — what did I but toss the thing
Into a fire to make more flame therewith,
Meaning no harm? So acts man three-years old!
I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,
But guilt was none to punish. Man mature —
Each word of his I lightly held, each look
I turned from — wish that wished in vain — nay, will

That willed and yet went all to waste — 't is these
Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather grant
Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.
However near I stand in his regard,
So much the nearer had I stood by steps
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their help.
That I call Hell; why further punishment?"

When I vexed you and you chid me,
And I owned my fault and turned
My cheek the way you bid me,
And confessed the blow well earned, —

My comfort all the while was
— Fault was faulty — near, not quite!
Do you wonder why the smile was?
O'erpunished wrong grew right.

But faults you ne'er suspected,
Nay, praised, no faults at all, —
Those would you had detected —
Crushed eggs whence snakes could crawl!

TWO CAMELS.

Quoth one: "Sir, solve a scruple! No true sage
I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus:
'Wouldst thou be wise? Then mortify thyself!
Balk of its craving every bestial sense!
Say "If I relish melons — so do swine!
Horse, ass and mule consume their provender
Nor leave a pea-pod: fasting feeds the soul."'

Thus they admonish : while thyself, I note,
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,
Nor fallest foul of whoso licks his lips
And sighs — 'Well-saffroned was that barley soup!'
Can wisdom co-exist with — gorge-and-swill,
I say not, — simply sensual preference
For this or that fantastic meat and drink?
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its wont
This morning, and thou hast already donned
Thy sheepskin over-garment: sure the sage
Is busied with conceits that soar above
A petty change of season and its chance
Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze?
I always thought, Sir" . . .

"Son," Ferishtah said,
"Truth ought to seem as never thought before.
How if I give it birth in parable?
A neighbor owns two camels, beasts of price
And promise, destined each to go, next week,
Swiftly and surely with his merchandise
From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce
To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and drouth,
In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.
Each falls to meditation o'er his crib
Piled high with provender before the start.
Quoth this: 'My soul is set on winning praise
From goodman lord and master, — hump to hoof,
I dedicate me to his service. How?
Grass, purslane, lupines and I know not what,
Crammed in my manger? Ha, I see — I see!
No, master, spare thy money! I shall trudge
The distance and yet cost thee not a doit
Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.'

'Be magnified, O master, for the meal
So opportunely liberal!' quoth that.
'What use of strength in me but to surmount
Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy bales
No knee until I reach the glad bazaar?
Thus I do justice to thy fare: no sprig
Of toothsome chervil must I leave unchewed!
Too bitterly should I reproach myself
Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar,
Remembering how the merest mouthful more
Had heartened me to manage yet a mile!'
And so it proved: the too-abstemious brute
Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the thieves,
His carcass fed the vultures: not so he
The wisely thankful, who, good market-drudge,
Let down his lading in the market-place,
No damage to a single pack. Which beast,
Think ye, had praise and patting and a brand
Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on flank?
So, with thy squeamish scruple. What imports
Fasting or feasting? Do thy day's work, dare
Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
Is hindrance sought and found. Win but the race —
Who shall object 'He tossed three wine cups off,
And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips'?

"More soberly, — consider this, my Son!
Put case I never have myself enjoyed,
Known by experience what enjoyment means,
How shall I — share enjoyment? — no, indeed! —
Supply it to my fellows, — ignorant,
As so I should be of the thing they crave,
How it affects them, works for good or ill.
Style my enjoyment self-indulgence — sin —

Why should I labor to infect my kind
With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,
Who else might neither catch nor give again
Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery ?
Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,
Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.
Renounce joy for my fellows' sake ? That 's joy
Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not theirs ?
Why, the physician called to help the sick,
Cries 'Let me, first of all, discard my health !'
No, Son : the richness hearted in such joy
Is in the knowing what are gifts we give,
Not in a vain endeavor not to know !
Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it !
The Adversary said, — a Jew reports, —
החנם ירא איוב אלהים:
In Persian phrase, 'Does Job fear God for naught?'
Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool !
He nowise isolates himself and plays
The independent equal, owns no more
Than himself gave himself, so why thank God ?
A proper speech were this מאלהים
'Equals we are, Job, labor for thyself,
Nor bid me help thee : bear, as best flesh may,
Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure :
Beg of me nothing thou thyself mayst win
By work, or waive with magnanimity,
Since we are peers acknowledged, — scarcely peers,
Had I implanted any want of thine
Only my power could meet and gratify.'
No : rather hear, at man's indifference —
'Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
Hungry for music, and direct thine eye

To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
Unless I meant thee to beseech me play ?' ''

Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder
— Simple dust it seemed — and half-unstop a phial :
— Out dropped harmless dew. " Mixed nothings make '' — quoth he —
" Something ! '' So they did : a thunderclap, but louder —
Lightning-flash, but fiercer — put spectators' nerves to trial :
Sure enough, we learned what was, imagined what might be.

Had I no experience how a lip's mere tremble,
Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change of color,
These effect a heartquake, — how should I conceive
What a heaven there may be ? Let it but resemble
Earth myself have known ! No bliss that 's finer, fuller,
Only — bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.

CHERRIES.

" What, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal :
Cherries so ripe already ? Eat apace !
I recollect thy lesson yesterday.
Yet — thanks, Sir, for thy leave to interrupt '' . . .

" Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God ! "

" There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit ! —
Thanks being praise, or tantamount thereto.
Prithee consider, have not things degree,
Lofty and low ? Are things not great and small,

Thence claiming praise and wonder more or less?
Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too,
Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends
With just this precept 'Never faith enough
In man as weakness, God as potency'?
When I would pay soul's tribute to that same,
Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars
Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?
What are man's puny members and as mean
Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari?
There is the marvel!"

"Not to man — that's me.
List to what happened late, in fact or dream.
A certain stranger, bound from far away,
Still the Shah's subject, found himself before
Ispahan palace-gate. As duty bade,
He enters in the courts, will, if he may,
See so much glory as befits a slave
Who only comes, of mind to testify
How great and good is shown our lord the Shah.
In he walks, round he casts his eye about,
Looks up and down, admires to heart's content,
Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,
None says his reverence nay: peeps in at each,
Wonders at all the unimagined use,
Gold here and jewels there, — so vast, that hall —
So perfect yon pavilion! — lamps above
Bidding look up from luxuries below, —
Evermore wonder topping wonder, — last —
Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,
A nest-like little chamber, with his name,
His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,
Plain o'er the entry: what, and he descries

Just those arrangements inside, — oh, the care! —
Suited to soul and body both, — so snug
The cushion — nay, the pipe-stand furnished so!
Whereat he cries aloud, — what think'st thou, Friend?
'That these my slippers should be just my choice,
Even to the color that I most affect,
Is nothing: ah, that lamp, the central sun,
What must it light within its minaret
I scarce dare guess the good of! Who lives there?
That let me wonder at, — no slipper-toys
Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them — thus!'

"Never enough faith in omnipotence, —
Never too much, by parity, of faith
In impuissance, man's — which turns to strength
When once acknowledged weakness every way.
How? Hear the teaching of another tale.

"Two men once owed the Shah a mighty sum,
Beggars they both were: this one crossed his arms
And bowed his head, — 'whereof,' — sighed he, —
'each hair
Proved it a jewel, how the host's amount
Were idly strewn for payment at thy feet!'
'Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and scant!
All of the berries on my currant-bush,
What roots of garlic have escaped the mice,
And some five pippins from the seedling tree, —
Would they were half-a-dozen! anyhow,
Accept my all, poor beggar that I am!'
'Received in full of all demands!' smiled back
The apportioner of every lot of ground
From inch to acre. Littleness of love
Befits the littleness of loving thing.
What if he boasted 'Seeing I am great,

Great must my corresponding tribute be?'
Mushtari, — well, suppose him seven times seven
The sun's superior, proved so by some sage:
Am I that sage? To me his twinkle blue
Is all I know of him and thank him for,
And therefore I have put the same in verse —
'Like yon blue twinkle, twinks thine eye, my Love!'

"Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuch
Because thy offering, — littleness itself, —
Is lessened by admixture sad and strange
Of mere man's-motives, — praise with fear, and love
With looking after that same love's reward.
Alas, Friend, what was free from this alloy, —
Some smatch thereof, — in best and purest love
Proffered thy earthly father? Dust thou art,
Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father took
The dust, and kindly called the handful — gold,
Nor cared to count what sparkled here and there,
Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love
(Sum up thus) for the lowest favors first,
The commonest of comforts! aught beside
Very omnipotence had overlooked
Such needs, arranging for thy little life.
Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment
At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled
By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes
A roughness of my palate, that I know:
His Maker knows why Mushtari was made."

Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed with despair
Wealth that never yet was but might be — all that verse-making were

If the life would but lengthen to wish, let the mind be
laid bare.
So I said "To do little is bad, to do nothing is worse" —
And made verse.

Love-making, — how simple a matter! No depths to
explore,
No heights in a life to ascend! No disheartening Before,
No affrighting Hereafter, — love now will be love
evermore.
So I felt "To keep silence were folly:" — all lan-
guage above, I made love.

PLOT-CULTURE.

"Ay, but, Ferishtah," — a disciple smirked, —
"That verse of thine 'How twinks thine eye, my Love,
Blue as yon star-beam!' much arrides myself
Who haply may obtain a kiss therewith
This eve from Laila where the palms abound —
My youth, my warrant — so the palms be close!
Suppose when thou art earnest in discourse
Concerning high and holy things, — abrupt
I out with — 'Laila's lip, how honey-sweet!' —
What say'st thou, were it scandalous or no?
I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth
For daring — prodigy of impudence —
Publish what, secret, were permissible.
Well, — one slide further in the imagined slough, —
Knee-deep therein, (respect thy reverence!) —
Suppose me well aware thy very self
Stooped prying through the palm-screen, while I dared
Solace me with caressings all the same?
Unutterable, nay — unthinkable,

Undreamable a deed of shame! Alack,
How will it fare shouldst thou impress on me
That certainly an Eye is over all
And each, to mark the minute's deed, word, thought,
As worthy of reward or punishment?
Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed shame,
Broad daylight perpetration, — so to speak, —
I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,
With black night's help about me? Yet I stand
A man, no monster, made of flesh not cloud:
Why made so, if my making prove offence
To Maker's eye and ear?"

"Thou wouldst not stand
Distinctly Man," — Ferishtah made reply,
"Not the mere creature, — did no limit-line
Round thee about, apportion thee thy place
Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable, —
Minuteness severed from immensity.
All of thee for the Maker, — for thyself,
Workings inside the circle that evolve
Thine all, — the product of thy cultured plot.
So much of grain the ground's lord bids thee yield
Bring sacks to granary in Autumn! spare
Daily intelligence of this manure,
That compost, how they tend to feed the soil:
There thou art master sole and absolute
— Only, remember doomsday! Twitt'st thou me
Because I turn away my outraged nose
Shouldst thou obtrude thereon a shovelful
Of fertilizing kisses? Since thy sire
Wills and obtains thy marriage with the maid,
Enough! Be reticent, I counsel thee,
Nor venture to acquaint him, point by point,

What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse?
Keep thy instruction to thyself! My ass —
Only from him expect acknowledgment
The while he champs my gift, a thistle-bunch,
How much he loves the largess: of his love
I only tolerate so much as tells
By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,
The meal, that heartens him to do my work,
Tickles his palate as I meant it should."

Not with my Soul, Love! — bid no Soul like mine
Lap thee around nor leave the poor Sense room!
Soul, — travel-worn, toil-weary, — would confine
Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,
Captures from soarings high and divings deep.
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep?
Take Sense, too — let me love entire and whole —
Not with my Soul!

Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,
Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!
No past, no future — so thine arms but screen
The present from surprise! not there, 't is here —
Not then, 't is now: — back, memories that intrude!
Make, Love, the universe our solitude,
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll —
Sense quenching Soul!

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR.

"KNOWLEDGE deposed, then!" — groaned whom that most grieved
As foolishest of all the company.
"What, knowledge, man's distinctive attribute,
He doffs that crown to emulate an ass
Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least
Husked lupines, and belike the feeder's self
— Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines?"

"Friend," quoth Ferishtah, "all I seem to know
Is — I know nothing save that love I can
Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned
In youth with knowledge, — off, alas, crown slipped
Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still
Which nowise proved more constant: gain, to-day,
Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last
— Knowledge, the golden? — lacquered ignorance!
As gain — mistrust it! Not as means to gain:
Lacquer we learn by: cast in fining-pot,
We learn, — when what seemed ore assayed proves dross, —
Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
Clarified up to test of crucible.
The prize is in the process: knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach,
But love is victory, the prize itself:
Love — trust to! Be rewarded for the trust
In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,
Attainment — no delusion, whatsoe'er

The prize be: apprehended as a prize,
A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps
An orange as he fails to grasp the sun
Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds
The foolish fruit unworthy grasping? Joy
In shape and color, — that was joy as true —
Worthy in its degree of love — as grasp
Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.
What if he said the orange held no juice
Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck?
This constitutes the curse that spoils our life
And sets man maundering of his misery,
That there's no meanest atom he obtains
Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries
'Hold here, — I have the whole thing, — know, this time,
Nor need search farther!' Whereas, strew his path
With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops:
'This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this
And praise it, truly? I reserve my thanks
For something more substantial.' Fool not thus
In practising with life and its delights!
Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know
The unknowable. Enough to say 'I feel
Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love
The love its cause behind, — I can and do!'
Nor turn to try thy brain-power on the fact,
(Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now —
Its how and why, i' the future and elsewhere)
Except to — yet once more, and ever again,
Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance:
Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality
Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby,
This — nigh upon revealment as it seemed

A minute since — defies thy longing looks,
Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.
Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
As wholly love allied to ignorance!
There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,
And praise is love! Refine the same, contrive
An intellectual tribute — ignorance
Appreciating ere approbative
Of knowledge that is infinite? With us
The small, who use the knowledge of our kind
Greater than we, more wisely ignorance
Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows
No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,
Takes first what comes first, only sure so far.
By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands
So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour;
What if the townsmen said 'Before we thank
Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,
And go to dinner since its shade tells noon,
Needs must we have the craftsman's purpose clear
On half a hundred more recondite points
Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal!'
Better they say 'How opportune the help!
Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage
Whom Hudhud taught, — the gracious spirit-bird, —
How to construct the pillar, teach the time!'
So let us say — not 'Since we know, we love,'
But rather 'Since we love, we know enough.'
Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled
Mushtari in his courses? Added grace
Surely I count it that the sage devised,
Beside celestial service, ministry
To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon
Falling as folk foresee. Once more then, Friend —

(What ever in those careless ears of thine
Withal I needs must round thee) — knowledge doubt
Even wherein it seems demonstrable!
Love, — in the claim for love, that's gratitude
For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt!
Pay its due tribute, — sure that pleasure is,
While knowledge may be, at the most. See, now!
Eating my breakfast, I thanked God. — 'For love
Shown in the cherries' flavor? Consecrate
So petty an example?' There's the fault!
We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand
To unearth water: if first handful scooped
Yields thee a draught, what need of digging down
Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring
Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land?
Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks
The drouth that glues thy tongue, — what more would help
A brimful cistern? Ask the cistern's boon
When thou wouldst solace camels: in thy case,
Relish the drop and love the lovable!"

"And what may be unlovable?"

"Why, hate!
If out of sand comes sand and naught but sand
Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,
Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, belike,
Constitutes just the trial of thy wit
And worthiness to gain promotion, — hence,
Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.
Thy soul's environment of things perceived,
Things visible and things invisible,
Fact, fancy — all was purposed to evolve
This and this only — was thy wit of worth

To recognize the drop's use, love the same,
And loyally declare against mirage
Though all the world asseverated dust
Was good to drink? Say, 'what made moist my lip,
That I acknowledged moisture:' thou art saved!

"For why? The creature and creator stand
Rightly related so. Consider well!
Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
Must be ignored: love gains him by first leap.
Frankly accept the creatureship: ask good
To love for: press bold to the tether's end
Allotted to this life's intelligence!
'So we offend?' Will it offend thyself
If, — impuissance praying potency, —
Thy child beseech that thou command the sun
Rise bright to-morrow — thou, he thinks supreme
In power and goodness, why shouldst thou refuse?
Afterward, when the child matures, perchance
The fault were greater if, with wit full-grown,
The stripling dared to ask for a dinar,
Than that the boy cried 'Pluck Sitara down
And give her me to play with!' 'Tis for him
To have no bounds to his belief in thee:
For thee it also is to let her shine
Lustrous and lonely, so best serving him!"

Ask not one least word of praise!
Words declare your eyes are bright?
What then meant that summer day's
Silence spent in one long gaze?
Was my silence wrong or right?

Words of praise were all to seek!
Face of you and form of you,
Did they find the praise so weak
When my lips just touched your cheek —
Touch which let my soul come through?

A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING.

"Look, I strew beans" . . .

(Ferishtah, we premise,
Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment
Who put the peevish question: "Sir, be frank!
A good thing or a bad thing — Life is which?
Shine and shade, happiness and misery
Battle it out there: which force beats, I ask?
If I pick beans from out a bushelful —
This one, this other, — then demand of thee
What color names each justly in the main, —
'Black' I expect, and 'White' ensues reply:
No hesitation for what speck, spot, splash
Of either color's opposite, intrudes
To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans
Substitute days, — show, ranged in order, Life —
Then, tell me its true color! Time is short,
Life's days compose a span, — as brief be speech!
Black I pronounce for, like the Indian Sage, —
Black — present, past and future, interspersed
With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk style Good
Because not Evil: no, indeed? Forsooth
Black's shade on White is White too! What's the worst

Of Evil but that, past, it overshades
The else-exempted present? — memory,
We call the plague! 'Nay, but our memory fades
And leaves the past unsullied!' Does it so?
Why, straight the purpose of such breathing-space,
Such respite from past ill, grows plain enough!
What follows on remembrance of the past?
Fear of the future! Life, from birth to death,
Means — either looking back on harm escaped,
Or looking forward to that harm's return
With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,
Never the whole consummate quietude
Life should be, troubled by no fear! — nor hope —
I'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide, hope
Loses itself in certainty. Such lot
Man's might have been: I leave the consequence
To bolder critics of the Primal Cause;
Such am not I: but, man — as man I speak:
Black is the bean-throw: evil is the Life!")

"Look, I strew beans" — resumed Ferishtah —
"beans
Blackish and whitish; what they figure forth
Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and good,
That make up Life, — each moment when he feels
Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense,
Consciousness anyhow: there 's stand the first;
Whence next advance shall be from points to line,
Singulars to a series, parts to whole,
And moments to the Life. How look they now,
Viewed in the large, those little joys and griefs
Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans
— These which I strew? This bean was white, this
— black,

Set by itself, — but see if, good and bad
Each following either in companionship,
Black have not grown less black and white less white,
Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish — gray,
And the whole line turns — well, or black to thee
Or white belike to me — no matter which:
The main result is — both are modified
According to our eye's scope, power of range
Before and after. Black dost call this bean?
What, with a whiteness in its wake, which — see —
Suffuses half its neighbor? — and, in turn,
Lowers its pearliness late absolute,
Frowned upon by the jet which follows hard —
Else wholly white my bean were. Choose a joy!
Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,
And sobered somewhat by the shadowy sense
Of sorrow which came after or might come.
Joy, sorrow, — by precedence, subsequence —
Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life
That's both and neither wholly: gray or dun?
Dun thou decidest? gray prevails, say I:
Wherefore? Because my view is wide enough,
Reaches from first to last nor winks at all:
Motion achieves it: stop short — fast we stick, —
Probably at the bean that 's blackest.
"Since —
Son, trust me, — this I know and only this —
I am in motion, and all things beside
That circle round my passage through their midst, —
Motionless, these are, as regarding me:
— Which means, myself I solely recognize.
They too may recognize themselves, not me,
For aught I know or care: but plain they serve
This, if no other purpose — stuff to try

And test my power upon of raying light
And lending hue to all things as I go
Moonlike through vapor. Mark the flying orb!
Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh
At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passaged through,
This was and is and will be evermore
Colored in permanence? The glory swims
Girdling the glory-giver, swallowed straight
By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified
Behind as erst before the advancer: gloom?
Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds
From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,
And where 's the gloom now? — silver-smitten straight,
One glow and variegation! So with me,
Who move and make, — myself, — the black, the white,
The good, the bad, of life's environment.
Stand still! black stays black: start again! there 's white
Asserts supremacy: the motion 's all
That colors me my moment: seen as joy?
I have escaped from sorrow, or that was
Or might have been: as sorrow? — thence shall be
Escape as certain: white preceded black,
Black shall give way to white as duly, — so,
Deepest in black means white most imminent.
Stand still, — have no before, no after! — life
Proves death, existence grows impossible
To man like me. 'What else is blessed sleep
But death, then?' Why, a rapture of release
From toil, — that 's sleep's approach: as certainly,
The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er:
These round the blank inconsciousness between
Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze
Just through that blank's interposition. Hence

The use of things external: man — that 's I —
Practise thereon my power of casting light,
And calling substance, — when the light I cast
Breaks into color, — by its proper name
— A truth and yet a falsity: black, white,
Names each bean taken from what lay so close
And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed
Seen in the passage past it, — pleasure prove
No mere delusion while I paused to look, —
Though what an idle fancy was that fear
Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue!
While how, again, pain's shade enhanced the shine
Of pleasure, else no pleasure! Such effects
Came of such causes. Passage at an end, —
Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused
So that one glance may gather blacks and whites
Into a life-time, — like my bean-streak there,
Why, white they whirl into, not black — for me!"

"Ay, but for me? The indubitable blacks,
Immeasurable miseries, here, there
And everywhere i' the world — world outside thine
Paled off so opportunely, — body's plague,
Torment of soul, — where 's found thy fellowship
With wide humanity all round about
Reeling beneath its burden? What 's despair?
Behold that man, that woman, child — nay, brute!
Will any speck of white unblacken life
Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now from end to end
For him or her or it — who knows? Not I!"

"Nor I, Son! 'It' shall stand for bird, beast, fish,
Reptile, and insect even: take the last!
There's the palm-aphis, minute miracle
As wondrous every whit as thou or I:

Well, and his world's the palm-frond, there he 's born,
Lives, breeds and dies in that circumference,
An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,
Purlieu and grave: the palm's use, ask of him!
'To furnish these,' replies his wit: ask thine —
Who see the heaven above, the earth below,
Creation everywhere, — these, each and all
Claim certain recognition from the tree
For special service rendered branch and bole,
Top-tuft and tap-root: — for thyself, thus seen,
Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,
— Maybe, thatch huts with, — have another use
Than strikes the aphis. So with me, my Son!
I know my own appointed patch i' the world,
What pleasures me or pains there: all outside —
How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,
Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once
I pry beneath the semblance, — all that 's fit,
To practise with, — reach where the fact may lie
Fathom-deep lower. There 's the first and last
Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white?
Not mine! The aphis feeds, nor finds his leaf
Untenable because a lance-thrust, nay,
Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside,
Where certain other aphids live and love.
Restriction to his single inch of white,
That 's law for him, the aphis: but for me,
The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch
Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe
All round about me: one such burst of black
Intolerable o'er the life I count
White in the main, and, yea — white's faintest trace
Were clean abolished once and evermore.
Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom

So far as I discern: how far is that?
God's care be God's! 'T is mine — to boast no joy
Unsobered by such sorrows of my kind
As sully with their shade my life that shines."

"Reflected possibilities of pain,
Forsooth, just chasten pleasure! Pain itself, —
Fact and not fancy, does not this affect
The general color?"

"Here and there a touch
Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things —
That all about, external to myself,
Was meant to be suspected, — not revealed
Demonstrably a cheat, — but half seen through,
Lest white should rule unchecked along the line:
Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,
Of absolute and irretrievable
And all-subduing black, — black's soul of black
Beyond white's power to disintensify, —
Of that I saw no sample: such may wreck
My life and ruin my philosophy
To-morrow, doubtless: hence the constant shade
Cast on life's shine, — the tremor that intrudes
When firmest seems my faith in white. Dost ask
'Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt
From black experience? Why, if God be just,
Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out
To undergo experience for his sake,
Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,
In him might temper to the due degree
Joy's else-excessive largess?' Why, indeed!
Back are we brought thus to the starting-point —
Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,
These stop my answer. Aphis that I am,

How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will
Into my fellow's liberty of range,
Enter into his sense of black and white,
As either, seen by me from outside, seems
Predominatingly the color? Life,
Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into
And myself live there? No — no more than pass
From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask
Daily, to some ungracious land afar,
Told of by travellers, where the might of snow
Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves
Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,
Beat though he may unduly, that I know:
How blood once curdled ever creeps again,
Baffles conjecture: yet since people live
Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me,
Somehow provided for their sake must dawn
Compensative resource. 'No sun, no grapes, —
Then, no subsistence!' — were it wisely said?
Or this well-reasoned — 'Do I dare feel warmth
And please my palate here with Persia's vine,
Though, over-mounts, — to trust the traveller, —
Snow, feather thick, is falling while I feast?
What if the cruel winter force his way
Here also?' Son, the wise reply were this:
When cold from over-mounts spikes through and through
Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah, — then,
Time to look out for shelter — time, at least,
To wring the hands and cry 'No shelter serves!'
Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill
Warrants that I despair to find."

"No less,
Doctors have differed here; thou say'st thy say;

Another man's experience masters thine,
Flat controverted by the sourly-Sage,
The Indian witness who, with faculty
Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all
Chequer the world's predominating black,
No good oust evil from supremacy,
So that Life's best was that it led to death.
How of his testimony ?"

"Son, suppose
My camel told me : 'Threescore days and ten
I traversed hill and dale, yet never found
Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my drouth ;
Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof
That to survive was found impossible !'
'Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving beast'
(Reply were prompt), 'on flank this thwack of staff
Nowise affecting flesh that 's dead and dry !
Thou wincest ? Take correction twice, amend
Next time thy nomenclature ! Call white — white !'
The sourly-Sage, for whom life's best was death,
Lived out his seventy years, looked hale, laughed loud,
Liked — above all — his dinner, — lied, in short."

"Lied is a rough phrase : say he fell from truth
In climbing towards it ! — sure less faulty so
Than had he sat him down and stayed content
With thy safe orthodoxy, 'White, all white,
White everywhere for certain I should see
Did I but understand how white is black,
As clearer sense than mine would.' Clearer sense, —
Whose may that be ? Mere human eyes I boast,
And such distinguish colors in the main,
However any tongue, that 's human too,

Please to report the matter. Dost thou blame
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity, —
Ever some gray that 's white, and dun that 's black, —
When shall we rest upon the thing itself
Not on its semblance? — Soul — too weak, forsooth,
To cope with fact — wants fiction everywhere!
Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost!"

"Take one and try conclusions — this, suppose! 290
God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful: truth?
Take it and rest there. What is man? Not God:
None of these absolutes therefore, — yet himself,
A creature with a creature's qualities.
Make them agree, these two conceptions! Each
Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,
Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,
Doing a maker's pleasure — with results 300
Which — call, the wide world over, 'what must be' —
But, from man's point of view, and only point
Possible to his powers, call — evidence
Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock ourselves
In all that 's best of us, — man's blind but sure
Craving for these in very deed not word,
Reality and not illusion. Well, —
Since these nowhere exist — nor there where cause
Must have effect, nor here where craving means
Craving unfollowed by fit consequence 310
And full supply, aye sought for, never found —
These — what are they but man's own rule of right?
A scheme of goodness recognized by man,

Although by man unrealizable, —
Not God's with whom to will were to perform :
Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.
What follows but that God, who could the best,
Has willed the worst, — while man, with power to match
Will with performance, were deservedly
Hailed the supreme — provided . . . here's the touch
That breaks the bubble . . . this concept of man's
Were man's own work, his birth of heart and brain,
His native grace, no alien gift at all.
The bubble breaks here. Will of man create?
No more than this my hand which strewed the beans
Produced them also from its finger-tips.
Back goes creation to its source, source prime
And ultimate, the single and the sole."

"How reconcile discordancy, — unite
Notion and notion — God that only can
Yet does not, — man that would indeed
But just as surely cannot, — both in one?
What help occurs to thy intelligence?"

"Ah, the beans, — or, — example better yet, —
A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom
And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan!
The weaver plied his work with lengths of silk
Dyed each to match some jewel as it might,
And wove them, this by that. 'How comes it, friend,' —
(Quoth I) — 'that while, apart, this fiery hue,
That watery dimness, either shocks the eye,
So blinding bright, or else offends again
By dulness, — yet the two, set each by each,

Somehow produce a color born of both,
A medium profitable to the sight?'
'Such medium is the end whereat I aim,' —
Answered my craftsman: 'there 's no single tinct
Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste
The secret of the diamond: join extremes,
Results a serviceable medium-ghost,
The diamond's simulation.' Even so
I needs must blend the quality of man
With quality of God, and so assist
Mere human sight to understand my Life,
What is, what should be, — understand thereby
Wherefore I hate the first and love the last, —
Understand why things so present themselves
To me, placed here to prove I understand.
Thus, from beginning runs the chain to end,
And binds me plain enough. By consequence,
I bade thee tolerate, — not kick and cuff
The man who held that natures did in fact
Blend so, since so thyself must have them blend
In fancy, if it take a flight so far."

"A power, confessed past knowledge, nay, past thought,
— Thus thought thus known!"

"To know of, think about —
Is all man's sum of faculty effects
When exercised on earth's least atom, Son!
What was, what is, what may such atom be?
No answer! Still, what seems it to man's sense?
An atom with some certain properties
Known about, thought of as occasion needs,
— Man's — but occasions of the universe?
Unthinkable, unknowable to man.

Yet, since to think and know fire through and through
Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire unknown,
Its uses — are they so unthinkable?
Pass from such obvious power to powers unseen,
Undreamed of save in their sure consequence:
Take that, we spoke of late, which draws to ground
The staff my hand lets fall: it draws, at least —
Thus much man thinks and knows, if nothing more."

"Ay, but man puts no mind into such power!
He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,
Nor prays it spare his pate while underneath.
Does he thank Summer though it plumped the rind?
Why thank the other force — whate'er its name —
Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue to taste
And throat to let the pulp pass? Force and force,
No end of forces! Have they mind like man?"

"Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,
Bringing thy tribute as appointed. 'Here
Come I to pay my due!' Whereat one slave
Obsequious spreads a carpet for thy foot,
His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third
Prepares a pipe: what thanks or praise have they?
Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude
Goes past them to the Shah whose gracious nod
Set all the sweet civility at work;
But for his ordinance, I much suspect,
My scholar had been left to cool his heels
Uncarpeted, or warm them — likelier still —
With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves
Needs must obey their master: 'force and force,
No end of forces,' act as bids some force
Supreme o'er all and each: where find that one?

How recognize him? Simply as thou didst
The Shah — by reasoning 'Since I feel a debt,
Behoves me pay the same to one aware
I have my duty, he his privilege.'
Didst thou expect the slave who charged thy pipe
Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag
And save thee further trouble?"

"Be it so!
The sense within me that I owe a debt
Assures me — somewhere must be somebody
Ready to take his due. All comes to this —
Where due is, there acceptance follows: find
Him who accepts the due! and why look far?
Behold thy kindred compass thee about!
Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt die,
Heroic man stands forth as Shahan-Shah.
Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest,
How come they short of lordship that 's to seek
Dead worthies! but men live undoubtedly
Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's match,
Valiant like Kawah: ay, and while earth lasts
Such heroes shall abound there — all for thee
Who profitest by all the present, past,
And future operation of thy race.
Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of thanks,
Look wistful for some hand from out the clouds
To take it, when, all round, a multitude
Would ease thee in a trice?"

"Such tendered thanks
Would tumble back to who craved riddance, Son!
— Who but my sorry self? See! stars are out —
Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze beneath,

Go glorying, and glorify thee too
— Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty, weird Parwin!
Whether shall love and praise to stars be paid
Or — say — some Mubid who, for good to thee
Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own
Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless sight,
Let the stars' glory enter? Say his charm
Worked while thyself lay sleeping: as he went
Thou wakedst: 'What a novel sense have I!
Whom shall I love and praise?' 'The stars, each orb
Thou standest rapt beneath,' proposes one:
'Do not they live their life, and please themselves,
And so please thee? What more is requisite?'
Make thou this answer: 'If indeed no mage
Opened my eyes and worked a miracle,
Then let the stars thank me who apprehend
That such an one is white, such other blue!
But for my apprehension both were blank.
Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain
Make whites and blues, conceive without stars' help,
New qualities of color? were my sight
Lost or misleading, would yon red — I judge
A ruby's benefaction — stand for aught
But green from vulgar glass? Myself appraise
Lustre and lustre; should I overlook
Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,
Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he trusts
No more than I trust mine? My mage for me!
I never saw him: if he never was,
I am the arbitrator!' No, my Son!
Let us sink down to thy similitude:
I eat my apple, relish what is ripe —
The sunny side, admire its rarity

Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the rest
Hide commonly a maggot in the core, —
And down Zerdusht goes with due smack of lips :
But — thank an apple ? He who made my mouth
To masticate, my palate to approve,
My maw to further the concoction — Him
I thank, — but for whose work, the orchard's wealth
Might prove so many gall-nuts — stocks or stones
For aught that I should think, or know, or care."

" Why from the world," Ferishtah smiled, " should thanks
Go to this work of mine ? If worthy praise,
Praised let it be and welcome : as verse ranks,
So rate my verse : if good therein outweighs
Aught faulty judged, judge justly ! Justice says :
Be just to fact, or blaming or approving :
But — generous ? No, nor loving !

" Loving ! what claim to love has work of mine ?
Concede my life were emptied of its gains
To furnish forth and fill work's strict confine,
Who works so for the world's sake — he complains
With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains.
I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty :
Sought, found and did my duty."

EPILOGUE.

Oh, Love — no, Love ! All the noise below, Love,
Groanings all and moanings — none of Life I lose !
All of Life 's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love —
" Hear at least, thou happy one ! " How can I,
Love, but choose ?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
— Much as when the moon's might frees a space from cloud —
Iridescent splendors: gloom — would else confound me —
Barriered off and banished far — bright-edged the blackest shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the faces
Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of old?
"What" — they smile — "our names, our deeds so soon erases
Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies enrolled?

"Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and mumming,
So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or whined?
Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!' and each was coming:
Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag behind!

"How of the field's fortune? That concerned our Leader!
Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings left and right:
Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,
Lay the blame or lit the praise: no care for cowards: fight!"

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth that's under,
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's success:

All the good and beauty, wonder crowning wonder,
Till my heart and soul applaud perfection, nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind disencharms
All the late enchantment! What if all be error—
If the halo irised round my head were, Love, thine arms?

PALAZZO GIUSTINIAN-RECANATI,
VENICE: *December* 1, 1883.

PARLEYINGS

WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY:

TO WIT:

BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE, DANIEL BARTOLI, CHRISTOPHER SMART, GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON, FRANCIS FURINI, GERARD DE LAIRESSE, AND CHARLES AVISON.

INTRODUCED BY

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN APOLLO AND THE FATES;

CONCLUDED BY

ANOTHER BETWEEN JOHN FUST AND HIS FRIENDS.

1887.

IN MEMORIAM J. MILSAND, OBIIT IV. SEPT. MDCCCLXXXVI.

Absens absentem auditque videtque.

APOLLO AND THE FATES.

A PROLOGUE.

(Hymn. in Mercurium, v. 559. Eumenides, vv. 693–4, 697–8. Alcestis, vv. 12, 33.)

APOLLO. [*From above.*

FLAME at my footfall, Parnassus! Apollo,
Breaking a-blaze on thy topmost peak,

Burns thence, down to the depths — dread hollow —
Haunt of the Dire Ones. Haste! They wreak
Wrath on Admetus whose respite I seek.

THE FATES. [*Below. Darkness.*

Dragonwise couched in the womb of our Mother,
Coiled at thy nourishing heart's core, Night!
Dominant Dreads, we, one by the other,
Deal to each mortal his dole of light
On earth — the upper, the glad, the bright.

CLOTHO.

Even so: thus from my loaded spindle
Plucking a pinch of the fleece, lo, "Birth"
Brays from my bronze lip: life I kindle:
Look, 't is a man! go, measure on earth
The minute thy portion, whatever its worth!

LACHESIS.

Woe-purfled, weal-prankt, — if it speed, if it linger, —
Life's substance and show are determined by me,
Who, meting out, mixing with sure thumb and finger,
Lead life the due length: is all smoothness and glee,
All tangle and grief? Take the lot, my decree!

ATROPOS.

— Which I make an end of: the smooth as the tangled
My shears cut asunder: each snap shrieks "One more
Mortal makes sport for us Moirai who dangled
The puppet grotesquely till earth's solid floor
Proved film he fell through, lost in Naught as before."

CLOTHO.

I spin thee a thread. Live, Admetus! Produce him!

LACHESIS.

Go, — brave, wise, good, happy! Now chequer
the thread!
He is slaved for, yet loved by a god. I unloose him
A goddess-sent plague. He has conquered, is wed,
Men crown him, he stands at the height, —

ATROPOS.

He is . . .

APOLLO. [*Entering: Light.*
"Dead?"

Nay, swart spinsters! So I surprise you
Making and marring the fortunes of Man?
Huddling — no marvel, your enemy eyes you —
Head by head bat-like, blots under the ban
Of daylight earth's blessing since time began!

THE FATES.

Back to thy blest earth, prying Apollo!
Shaft upon shaft transpierce with thy beams
Earth to the centre, — spare but this hollow
Hewn out of Night's heart, where our mystery seems
Mewed from day's malice: wake earth from her
dreams!

APOLLO.

Crones, 'tis your dusk selves I startle from slumber:
Day's god deposes you — queens Night-crowned!
— Plying your trade in a world ye encumber,

Fashioning Man's web of life — spun, wound,
Left the length ye allot till a clip strews the ground !

Behold I bid truce to your doleful amusement —
Annulled by a sunbeam !

THE FATES.

Boy, are not we peers ?

APOLLO.

You with the spindle grant birth : whose inducement
But yours — with the niggardly digits — endears
To mankind chance and change, good and evil ? Your
shears . . .

ATROPOS.

Ay, mine end the conflict : so much is no fable.
We spin, draw to length, cut asunder : what then ?
So it was, and so is, and so shall be : art able
To alter life's law for ephemeral men ?

APOLLO.

Nor able nor willing. To threescore and ten

Extend but the years of Admetus ! Disaster
O'ertook me, and, banished by Zeus, I became
A servant to one who forbore me though master :
True lovers were we. Discontinue your game,
Let him live whom I loved, then hate on, all the same !

THE FATES.

And what if we granted — law-flouter, use-trampler —
His life at the suit of an upstart ? Judge, thou —

Of joy were it fuller, of span because ampler?
For love's sake, not hate's, end Admetus — ay, now —
Not a gray hair on head, nor a wrinkle on brow!

For, boy, 't is illusion: from thee comes a glimmer
Transforming to beauty life blank at the best.
Withdraw — and how looks life at worst, when to shimmer
Succeeds the sure shade, and Man's lot frowns — confessed
Mere blackness chance-brightened? Whereof shall attest

The truth this same mortal, the darling thou stylest,
Whom love would advantage, — eke out, day by day,
A life which 't is solely thyself reconcilest
Thy friend to endure, — life with hope: take away
Hope's gleam from Admetus, he spurns it. For, say —

What 's infancy? Ignorance, idleness, mischief:
Youth ripens to arrogance, foolishness, greed:
Age — impotence, churlishness, rancor: call *this* chief
Of boons for thy loved one? Much rather bid speed
Our function, let live whom thou hatest indeed!

Persuade thee, bright boy-thing! Our eld be instructive!

APOLLO.

And certes youth owns the experience of age.
Ye hold then, grave seniors, my beams are productive
— They solely — of good that 's mere semblance, engage
Man's eye — gilding evil, Man's true heritage?

THE FATES.

So, even so! From without, — at due distance
If viewed, — set a-sparkle, reflecting thy rays, —
Life mimics the sun: but withdraw such assistance,
The counterfeit goes, the reality stays —
An ice-ball disguised as a fire-orb.

APOLLO.

What craze

Possesses the fool then whose fancy conceits him
As happy?

THE FATES.

Man happy?

APOLLO.

If otherwise — solve
This doubt which besets me! What friend ever greets him
Except with "Live long as the seasons revolve,"
Not "Death to thee straightway"? Your doctrines absolve

Such hailing from hatred: yet Man should know best.
He talks it, and glibly, as life were a load
Man fain would be rid of: when put to the test,
He whines "Let it lie, leave me trudging the road
That is rugged so far, but methinks . . . "

THE FATES.

Ay, 't is owed

To that glamour of thine, he bethinks him "Once past
The stony, some patch, nay, a smoothness of sward

Awaits my tired foot: life turns easy at last" —
Thy largess so lures him, he looks for reward
Of the labor and sorrow.

APOLLO.

It seems, then — debarred
Of illusion — (I needs must acknowledge the plea)
Man desponds and despairs. Yet, — still further to draw
Due profit from counsel, — suppose there should be
Some power in himself, some compensative law
By virtue of which, independently . . .

THE FATES.

Faugh!
Strength hid in the weakling!
What bowl-shape hast there,
Thus laughingly proffered? A gift to our shrine?
Thanks — worsted in argument! Not so? Declare
Its purpose!

APOLLO.

I proffer earth's product, not mine.
Taste, try, and approve Man's invention of — WINE!

THE FATES.

We feeding suck honeycombs.

APOLLO.

Sustenance meagre!
Such fare breeds the fumes that show all things amiss.
Quaff wine, — how the spirits rise nimble and eager,
Unscale the dim eyes! To Man's cup grant one kiss
Of your lip, then allow — no enchantment like this!

CLOTHO.

Unhook wings, unhood brows ! Dost hearken ?

LACHESIS.

I listen :
I see — smell the food these fond mortals prefer
To our feast, the bee's bounty !

ATROPOS.

The thing leaps ! But — glisten
Its best, I withstand it — unless all concur
In adventure so novel.

APOLLO.

Ye drink ?

THE FATES.

We demur.

APOLLO.

Sweet Trine, be indulgent nor scout the contrivance
Of Man — Bacchus-prompted ! The juice, I uphold,
Illuminates gloom without sunny connivance,
Turns fear into hope and makes cowardice bold, —
Touching all that is leadlike in life turns it gold ! 130

THE FATES.

Faith foolish as false !

APOLLO.

But essay it, soft sisters !
Then mock as ye may. Lift the chalice to lip !
Good : thou next — and thou ! Seems the web, to you twisters
Of life's yarn, so worthless ?

CLOTHO.

Who guessed that one sip
Would impart such a lightness of limb?

LACHESIS.

I could skip

In a trice from the pied to the plain in my woof!
What parts each from either? A hair's breadth, no inch.
Once learn the right method of stepping aloof,
Though on black next foot falls, firm I fix it, nor flinch,
— Such my trust white succeeds!

ATROPOS.

One could live — at a pinch!

APOLLO.

What beldames? Earth's yield, by Man's skill, can effect
Such a cure of sick sense that ye spy the relation
Of evil to good? But drink deeper, correct
Blear sight more convincingly still! Take your station
Beside me, drain dregs! Now for edification!

Whose gift have ye gulped? Thank not me but my brother,
Blithe Bacchus, our youngest of godships. 'T was he
Found all boons to all men, by one god or other
Already conceded, so judged there must be
New guerdon to grace the new advent, you see!

Else how would a claim to Man's homage arise?
The plan lay arranged of his mixed woe and weal,
So disposed — such Zeus' will — with design to make wise
The witless — that false things were mingled with real,
Good with bad: such the lot whereto law set the seal.

Now, human of instinct — since Semele's son,
Yet minded divinely — since fathered by Zeus,
With naught Bacchus tampered, undid not things done,
Owned wisdom anterior, would spare wont and use,
Yet change — without shock to old rule — introduce.

Regard how your cavern from crag-tip to base
Frowns sheer, height and depth adamantine, one death!
I rouse with a beam the whole rampart, displace
No splinter — yet see how my flambeau, beneath
And above, bids this gem wink, that crystal unsheath!

Withdraw beam — disclosure once more Night forbids you
Of spangle and sparkle — Day's chance-gift, surmised
Rock's permanent birthright: my potency rids you
No longer of darkness, yet light — recognized —
Proves darkness a mask: day lives on though disguised.

If Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster
Your sense, that life's fact grows from adverse and thwart
To helpful and kindly by means of a cluster —

Mere hand-squeeze, earth's nature sublimed by
Man's art —
Shall Bacchus claim thanks wherein Zeus has no part?

Zeus — wisdom anterior? No, maids, be admonished!
If morn's touch at base worked such wonders, much
more
Had noontide in absolute glory astonished
Your den, filled a-top to o'erflowing. I pour
No such mad confusion. 'T is Man's to explore

Up and down, inch by inch, with the taper his
reason:
No torch, it suffices — held deftly and straight.
Eyes, purblind at first, feel their way in due season,
Accept good with bad, till unseemly debate
Turns concord — despair, acquiescence in fate.

Who works this but Zeus? Are not instinct and
impulse,
Not concept and incept his work through Man's
soul
On Man's sense? Just as wine ere it reach brain must
brim pulse,
Zeus' flash stings the mind that speeds body to goal,
Bids pause at no part but press on, reach the whole.

For petty and poor is the part ye envisage
When — (quaff away, cummers!) — ye view,
last and first,
As evil Man's earthly existence. Come! *Is* age,
Is infancy — manhood — so uninterspersed
With good — some faint sprinkle?

CLOTHO.

I 'd speak if I durst.

APOLLO.

Draughts dregward loose tongue-tie.

LACHESIS.

I'd see, did no web
Set eyes somehow winking.

APOLLO.

Drains-deep lies their purge
— True collyrium!

ATROPOS.

Words, surging at high-tide, soon ebb
From starved ears.

APOLLO.

Drink but down to the source, they resurge.
Join hands! Yours and yours too! A dance or a dirge?

CHORUS.

Quashed be our quarrel! Sourly and smilingly,
Bare and gowned, bleached limbs and browned,
Drive we a dance, three and one, reconcilingly,
Thanks to the cup where dissension is drowned,
Defeat proves triumphant and slavery crowned.

Infancy? What if the rose-streak of morning
Pale and depart in a passion of tears?
Once to have hoped is no matter for scorning!
Love once — e'en love's disappointment endears!
A minute's success pays the failure of years.

Manhood — the actual? Nay, praise the potential!
(Bound upon bound, foot it around!)

What *is?* No, what *may* be — sing! that's Man's essential!
(Ramp, tramp, stamp and compound
Fancy with fact — the lost secret is found!)

Age? Why, fear ends there: the contest concluded,
Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the fray:
Not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow eluded
Each blow fortune dealt him, and conquers to-day:
To-morrow — new chance and fresh strength, — might we say?

Laud then Man's life — no defeat but a triumph!
[*Explosion from the earth's centre.*

CLOTHO.

Ha, loose hands!

LACHESIS.

I reel in a swound.

ATROPOS.

Horror yawns under me, while from on high — humph!
Lightnings astound, thunders resound,
Vault-roof reverberates, groans the ground! [*Silence.*

APOLLO.

I acknowledge.

THE FATES.

Hence, trickster! Straight sobered are we!
The portent assures 't was our tongue spoke the truth,
Not thine. While the vapor encompassed us three
We conceived and bore knowledge — a bantling uncouth,
Old brains shudder back from: so — take it, rash youth!

Lick the lump into shape till a cry comes!

APOLLO.

I hear.

THE FATES.

Dumb music, dead eloquence! Say it, or sing!
What was quickened in us and thee also?

APOLLO.

I fear.

THE FATES.

Half female, half male — go, ambiguous thing!
While we speak — perchance sputter — pick up what we fling!

Known yet ignored, nor divined nor unguessed,
Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive to declare
What is ill, what is good in our spinning? Worst, best,
Change hues of a sudden: now here and now there
Flits the sign which decides: all about yet nowhere.

'T is willed so, — that Man's life be lived, first to last,
Up and down, through and through, — not in portions, forsooth,
To pick and to choose from. Our shuttles fly fast,
Weave living, not life sole and whole: as age — youth,
So death completes living, shows life in its truth.

Man learningly lives: till death helps him — no lore!
It is doom and must be. Dost submit?

APOLLO.

I assent —
Concede but Admetus! So much if no more

Of my prayer grant as peace-pledge! Be gracious
though, blent,
Good and ill, love and hate streak your life-gift!

THE FATES.

Content!

Such boon we accord in due measure. Life's term
We lengthen should any be moved for love's sake
To forego life's fulfilment, renounce in the germ
Fruit mature — bliss or woe — either infinite. Take
Or leave thy friend's lot: on his head be the stake!

APOLLO.

On mine, griesly gammers! Admetus, I know thee!
Thou prizest the right these unwittingly give
Thy subjects to rush, pay obedience they owe thee!
Importunate one with another they strive
For the glory to die that their king may survive.

Friends rush: and who first in all Pheræ appears
But thy father to serve as thy substitute?

CLOTHO.

Bah!

APOLLO.

Ye wince? Then his mother, well-stricken in years,
Advances her claim — or his wife —

LACHESIS.

Tra-la-la!

APOLLO.

But he spurns the exchange, rather dies!

ATROPOS.

Ha, ha, ha!

[APOLLO *ascends.* *Darkness.*

WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE.

I.

Ay, this same midnight, by this chair of mine,
Come and review thy counsels : art thou still
Stanch to their teaching ? — not as fools opine
Its purport might be, but as subtler skill
Could, through turbidity, the loaded line
Of logic casting, sound deep, deeper, till
It touched a quietude and reached a shrine
And recognized harmoniously combine
Evil with good, and hailed truth's triumph — thine,
Sage dead long since, Bernard de Mandeville !

II.

Only, 't is no fresh knowledge that I crave,
Fuller truth yet, new gainings from the grave ;
Here we alive must needs deal fairly, turn
To what account Man may Man's portion, learn
Man's proper play with truth in part, before
Entrusted with the whole. I ask no more
Than smiling witness that I do my best
With doubtful doctrine : afterward the rest !
So, silent face me while I think and speak !
A full disclosure ? Such would outrage law.
Law deals the same with soul and body : seek
Full truth my soul may, when some babe, I saw
A new-born weakling, starts up strong — not weak —
Man every whit, absolved from earning awe,
Pride, rapture, if the soul attains to wreak
Its will on flesh, at last can thrust, lift, draw,
As mind bids muscle — mind which long has striven,

Painfully urging body's impotence
To effort whereby — once law's barrier riven,
Life's rule abolished — body might dispense
With infancy's probation, straight be given
— Not by foiled darings, fond attempts back-driven,
Fine faults of growth, brave sins which saint when shriven —
To stand full-statured in magnificence.

III.

No : as with body so deals law with soul
That 's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
Through evil, — earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
Presumably : so far I understood
Thy teaching long ago. But what means this
— Objected by a mouth which yesterday
Was magisterial in antithesis
To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,
Though tremblingly the while ? " No sign " — groaned he —
" No stirring of God's finger to denote
He wills that right should have supremacy
On earth, not wrong ! How helpful could we quote
But one poor instance when he interposed
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
Between oppression and its victim, closed
Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake
From our long dream that justice bears no sword,
Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves !
So might we safely mock at what unnerves
Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's increase
That haply evil's strife with good shall cease
Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace

Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves
With scorn: there, also, what if justice swerves
From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke
Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's yoke —
Death should loose man from — fresh laid, past release?"

IV.

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me
This parlous friend who captured or set free
Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would draw
Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw
Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked
Out of his pathway if the object risked
Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe!
As when folk heard thee in old days pooh-pooh
Addison's tye-wig preachment, grant this friend —
(Whose groan I hear, with guffaw at the end
Disposing of mock-melancholy) — grant
His bilious mood one potion, ministrant
Of homely wisdom, healthy wit! For, hear!
"With power and will, let preference appear
By intervention ever and aye, help good
When evil's mastery is understood
In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong
Tramples weak right to nothingness: nay, long
Ere such sad consummation brings despair
To right's adherents, ah, what help it were
If wrong lay strangled in the birth — each head
Of the hatched monster promptly crushed, instead
Of spared to gather venom! We require
No great experience that the inch-long worm,
Free of our heel, would grow to vomit fire,
And one day plague the world in dragon form.
So should wrong merely peep abroad to meet

Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's way safe
For honest walking."

v.

Sage, once more repeat
Instruction! 'T is a sore to soothe not chafe.
Ah, Fabulist, what luck, could I contrive
To coax from thee another "Grumbling Hive"!
My friend himself wrote fables short and sweet:
Ask him — "Suppose the Gardener of Man's ground
Plants for a purpose, side by side with good,
Evil — (and that he does so — look around!
What does the field show?) — were it understood
That purposely the noxious plant was found
Vexing the virtuous, poison close to food,
If, at first stealing-forth of life in stalk
And leaflet-promise, quick his spud should balk
Evil from budding foliage, bearing fruit?
Such timely treatment of the offending root
Might strike the simple as wise husbandry,
But swift sure extirpation scarce would suit
Shrewder observers. Seed once sown thrives: why
Frustrate its product, miss the quality
Which sower binds himself to count upon?
Had seed fulfilled the destined purpose, gone
Unhindered up to harvest — what know I
But proof were gained that every growth of good
Sprang consequent on evil's neighborhood?"
So said your shrewdness: true — so did not say
That other sort of theorists who held
Mere unintelligence prepared the way
For either seed's upsprouting: you repelled
Their notion that both kinds could sow themselves.
True! but admit 't is understanding delves

And drops each germ, what else but folly thwarts
The doer's settled purpose? Let the sage
Concede a use to evil, though there starts
Full many a burgeon thence, to disengage
With thumb and finger lest it spoil the yield
Too much of good's main tribute! But our main
Tough-tendoned mandrake-monster — purge the field
Of him for once and all? It follows plain
Who set him there to grow beholds repealed
His primal law: his ordinance proves vain:
And what beseems a king who cannot reign,
But to drop sceptre valid arm should wield?

VI.

"Still there's a parable" — retorts my friend —
"Shows agriculture with a difference!
What of the crop and weeds which solely blend
Because, once planted, none may pluck them thence?
The Gardener contrived thus? Vain pretence!
An enemy it was who unawares
Ruined the wheat by interspersing tares.
Where's our desiderated forethought? Where's
Knowledge, where power and will in evidence
'T is Man's-play merely! Craft foils rectitude,
Malignity defeats beneficence.
And grant, at very last of all, the feud
'Twixt good and evil ends, strange thoughts intrude
Though good be garnered safely and good's foe
Bundled for burning. Thoughts steal: 'even so —
Why grant tares leave to thus o'ertop, o'ertower
Their field-mate, boast the stalk and flaunt the flower,
Triumph one sunny minute?' Knowledge, power
And will thus worked? Man's fancy makes the fault!
Man, with the narrow mind, must cram inside

His finite God's infinitude, — earth's vault
He bids comprise the heavenly far and wide,
Since Man may claim a right to understand
What passes understanding. So, succinct
And trimly set in order, to be scanned
And scrutinized, lo — the divine lies linked
Fast to the human, free to move as moves
Its proper match: awhile they keep the grooves,
Discreetly side by side together pace,
Till sudden comes a stumble incident
Likely enough to Man's weak-footed race,
And he discovers — wings in rudiment,
Such as he boasts, which full-grown, free-distent
Would lift him skyward, fail of flight while pent
Within humanity's restricted space.
Abjure each fond attempt to represent
The formless, the illimitable! Trace
No outline, try no hint of human face
Or form or hand!"

VII.

Friend, here's a tracing meant
To help a guess at truth you never knew.
Bend but those eyes now, using mind's eye too,
And note — sufficient for all purposes —
The ground-plan — map you long have yearned for — yes,
Made out in markings — more what artist can? —
Goethe's Estate in Weimar, — just a plan!
A. is the House, and B. the Garden-gate,
And C. the Grass-plot — you 've the whole estate
Letter by letter, down to Y. the Pond,
And Z. the Pig-sty. Do you look beyond
The algebraic signs, and captious say

"Is A. the House? But where's the Roof to A.,
Where's Door, where's Window? Needs must
House have such!"
Ay, that were folly. Why so very much
More foolish than our mortal purblind way
Of seeking in the symbol no mere point
To guide our gaze through what were else inane,
But things — their solid selves? "Is, joint by joint,
Orion man-like, — as these dots explain
His constellation? Flesh composed of suns —
How can such be?" exclaim the simple ones.
Look through the sign to the thing signified —
Shown nowise, point by point at best descried,
Each an orb's topmost sparkle: all beside
Its shine is shadow: turn the orb one jot —
Up flies the new flash to reveal 't was not
The whole sphere late flamboyant in your ken!

VIII.

"What need of symbolizing? Fitlier men
Would take on tongue mere facts — few, faint and far,
Still facts not fancies: quite enough they are,
That Power, that Knowledge, and that Will, — add
then
Immensity, Eternity: these jar
Nowise with our permitted thought and speech.
Why human attributes?"
A myth may teach:
Only, who better would expound it thus
Must be Euripides not Æschylus.

IX.

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense and dark,
Embattled crags and clouds, outbroke the Sun

Above the conscious earth, and one by one
Her heights and depths absorbed to the last spark
His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge
Of mountain-granite which, transformed to gold,
Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's dusk fold
On fold of vapor-swathing, like a bridge
Shattered beneath some giant's stamp. Night wist
Her work done and betook herself in mist
To marsh and hollow there to bide her time
Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere
Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace sublime
Thrilling her to the heart of things: since there
No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,
No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straightway grew
Glad through the inrush — glad nor more nor less
Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilderness,
Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch and spread,
The universal world of creatures bred
By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise —
All creatures but one only: gaze for gaze,
Joyless and thankless, who — all scowling can —
Protests against the innumerous praises? Man,
Sullen and silent.

Stand thou forth then, state
Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved — disconsolate —
While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay
And glad acknowledges the bounteous day!

X.

Man speaks now: "What avails Sun's earth-felt thrill
To me? Sun penetrates the ore, the plant —
They feel and grow: perchance with subtler skill
He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until

Each favored object pays life's ministrant
By pressing, in obedience to his will,
Up to completion of the task prescribed,
So stands and stays a type. Myself imbibed
Such influence also, stood and stand complete —
The perfect Man, — head, body, hands and feet,
True to the pattern : but does that suffice ?
How of my superadded mind which needs
— Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads
For — more than knowledge that by some device
Sun quickens matter : mind is nobly fain
To realize the marvel, make — for sense
As mind — the unseen visible, condense
— Myself — Sun's all-pervading influence
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain
What now perplexes. Let the oak increase
His corrugated strength on strength, the palm
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and balm, —
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated peace, —
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,
Drift in the blue, suspended, glorying, —
The lion lord it by the desert-spring, —
What know or care they of the power which pricked
Nothingness to perfection ? I, instead,
When all-developed still am found a thing
All-incomplete : for what though flesh had force
Transcending theirs — hands able to unring
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could outcourse
The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the king
Of carnage couched discrowned ? Mind seeks to see,
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,
The outside mind — whose quickening I attain
To recognize — I only. All in vain
Would mind address itself to render plain

The nature of the essence. Drag what lurks
Behind the operation — that which works
Latently everywhere by outward proof —
Drag that mind forth to face mine? No! aloof
I solely crave that one of all the beams
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my will
Should operate — myself for once have skill
To realize the energy which streams
Flooding the universe. Above, around,
Beneath — why mocks that mind my own thus found
Simply of service, when the world grows dark,
To half-surmise — were Sun's use understood,
I might demonstrate him supplying food,
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant one spark
Myself may deal with — make it thaw my blood
And prompt my steps, were truer to the mark
Of mind's requirement than a half-surmise
That somehow secretly is operant
A power all matter feels, mind only tries
To comprehend! Once more — no idle vaunt
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!' Mysteries
At source why probe into? Enough: display,
Make demonstrable, how, by night as day,
Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all 's informed
Equally by Sun's efflux! — source from whence
If just one spark I drew, full evidence
Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned —
Sun's self made palpable to Man!"

XI.

Thus moaned
Man till Prometheus helped him, — as we learn, —
Offered an artifice whereby he drew
Sun's rays into a focus, — plain and true,

The very Sun in little: made fire burn
And henceforth do Man service — glass-conglobed
Though to a pin-point circle — all the same
Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun disrobed
Of that else-unconceived essential flame
Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's eye strive
Achingly to companion as it may
The supersubtle effluence, and contrive
To follow beam and beam upon their way
Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense faint — confessed
Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed
Infinitude of action? Idle quest!
Rather ask aid from optics. Sense, descry
The spectrum — mind, infer immensity!
Little? In little, light, warmth, life are blessed —
Which, in the large, who sees to bless? Not I
More than yourself: so, good my friend, keep still
Trustful with — me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

WITH DANIEL BARTOLI.

I.

Don, the divinest women that have walked
Our world were scarce those saints of whom we talked.
My saint, for instance — worship if you will!
'T is pity poets need historians' skill:
What legendary 's worth a chronicle?

II.

Come, now! A great lord once upon a time
Visited — oh a king, of kings the prime,
To sign a treaty such as never was:

For the king's minister had brought to pass
That this same duke — so style him — must engage
Two of his dukedoms as an heritage
After his death to this exorbitant
Craver of kingship. "Let who lacks go scant,
Who owns much, give the more to!" Why rebuke?
So bids the devil, so obeys the duke.

III.

Now, as it happened, at his sister's house
— Duchess herself — indeed the very spouse
Of the king's uncle, — while the deed of gift
Whereby our duke should cut his rights adrift
Was drawing, getting ripe to sign and seal —
What does the frozen heart but uncongeal
And, shaming his transcendent kin and kith,
Whom do the duke's eyes make acquaintance with?
A girl. "What, sister, may this wonder be?"
"Nobody! Good as beautiful is she,
With gifts that match her goodness, no faint flaw
I' the white: she were the pearl you think you saw,
But that she is — what corresponds to white?
Some other stone, the true pearl's opposite,
As cheap as pearls are costly. She 's — now, guess
Her parentage! Once — twice — thrice? Foiled,
confess!
Drugs, duke, her father deals in — faugh, the scents! —
Manna and senna — such medicaments
For payment he compounds you. Stay — stay — stay!
I 'll have no rude speech wrong her! Whither away,
The hot-head? Ah, the scapegrace! She deserves
Respect — compassion, rather! Right it serves
My folly, trusting secrets to a fool!
Already at it, is he? She keeps cool —

Helped by her fan's spread. Well, our state atones
For thus much license, and words break no bones!"
(Hearts, though, sometimes.)

IV.

Next morn 't was "Reason, rate,
Rave, sister, on till doomsday! Sure as fate,
I wed that woman — what a woman is
Now that I know, who never knew till this!"
So swore the duke. "I wed her: once again —
Rave, rate, and reason — spend your breath in vain!"

V.

At once was made a contract firm and fast,
Published the banns were, only marriage, last,
Required completion when the Church's rite
Should bless and bid depart, make happy quite
The coupled man and wife for evermore:
Which rite was soon to follow. Just before —
All things at all but end — the folk o' the bride
Flocked to a summons. Pomp the duke defied:
"Of ceremony — so much as empowers,
Naught that exceeds, suits best a tie like ours —"
He smiled — "all else were mere futility.
We vow, God hears us: God and you and I —
Let the world keep at distance! This is why
We choose the simplest forms that serve to bind
Lover and lover of the human kind,
No care of what degree — of kings or clowns —
Come blood and breeding. Courtly smiles and frowns
Miss of their mark, would idly soothe or strike
My style and yours — in one style merged alike —
God's man and woman merely. Long ago
'T was rounded in my ears 'Duke, wherefore slow
To use a privilege? Needs must one who reigns

Pay reigning's due: since statecraft so ordains —
Wed for the commonweal's sake! law prescribes
One wife: but to submission license bribes
Unruly nature: mistresses accept
— Well, at discretion!' Prove I so inept
A scholar, thus instructed? Dearest, be
Wife and all mistresses in one to me,
Now, henceforth, and forever!" So smiled he.

VI.

Good: but the minister, the crafty one,
Got ear of what was doing — all but done —
Not sooner, though, than the king's very self,
Warned by the sister on how sheer a shelf
Royalty's ship was like to split. "I bar
The abomination! Mix with muck my star?
Shall earth behold prodigiously enorbed
An upstart marsh-born meteor sun-absorbed?
Nuptial me no such nuptials!" "Past dispute,
Majesty speaks with wisdom absolute,"
Admired the minister: "yet, all the same,
I would we may not — while we play his game,
The ducal meteor's — also lose our own,
The solar monarch's: we relieve your throne
Of an ungracious presence, like enough:
Balked of his project he departs in huff,
And so cuts short — dare I remind the king? —
Our not so unsuccessful bargaining.
The contract for eventual heritage
Happens to *pari passu* reach the stage
Attained by just this other contract, — each
Unfixed by signature though fast in speech.
Off goes the duke in dudgeon — off withal
Go with him his two dukedoms past recall.

You save a fool from tasting folly's fruit,
Obtain small thanks thereby, and lose to boot
Sagacity's reward. The jest is grim:
The man will mulct you — for amercing him?
Nay, for . . . permit a poor similitude!
A witless wight in some fantastic mood
Would drown himself: you plunge into the wave,
Pluck forth the undeserving: he, you save,
Pulls you clean under also for your pains.
Sire, little need that I should tax my brains
To help your inspiration!" "Let him sink!
Always contriving" — hints the royal wink —
"To keep ourselves dry while we claim his clothes."

VII.

Next day, the appointed day for plighting troths
At eve, — so little time to lose, you see,
Before the Church should weld indissolubly
Bond into bond, wed these who, side by side,
Sit each by other, bold groom, blushing bride, —
At the preliminary banquet, graced
By all the lady's kinsfolk come in haste
To share her triumph, — lo, a thunderclap!
"Who importunes now?" "Such is my mishap —
In the king's name! No need that any stir
Except this lady!" bids the minister:
"With her I claim a word apart, no more:
For who gainsays — a guard is at the door.
Hold, duke! Submit you, lady, as I bow
To him whose mouthpiece speaks his pleasure now!
It well may happen I no whit arrest
Your marriage: be it so, — we hope the best!
By your leave, gentles! Lady, pray you, hence!
Duke, with my soul and body's deference!"

VIII.

Doors shut, mouth opens and persuasion flows
Copiously forth. "What flesh shall dare oppose
The king's command? The matter in debate
— How plain it is! Yourself shall arbitrate,
Determine. Since the duke affects to rate
His prize in you beyond all goods of earth,
Accounts as naught old gains of rank and birth,
Ancestral obligation, recent fame,
(We know his feats) — nay, ventures to disclaim
Our will and pleasure almost — by report —
Waives in your favor dukeliness, in short, —
We — ('t is the king speaks) — who might forthwith stay
Such suicidal purpose, brush away
A bad example shame would else record, —
Lean to indulgence rather. At his word
We take the duke: allow him to complete
The cession of his dukedoms, leave our feet
Their footstool when his own head, safe in vault,
Sleeps sound. Nay, would the duke repair his fault
Handsomely, and our forfeited esteem
Recover, — what if wisely he redeem
The past, — in earnest of good faith, at once
Give us such jurisdiction for the nonce
As may suffice — prevent occasion slip —
And constitute our actual ownership?
Concede this — straightway be the marriage blessed
By warrant of this paper! Things at rest,
This paper duly signed, down drops the bar,
To-morrow you become — from what you are,
The druggist's daughter — not the duke's mere spouse,
But the king's own adopted: heart and house

Open to you — the idol of a court
'Which heaven might copy' — sing our poet-sort.
In this emergency, on you depends
The issue: plead what bliss the king intends!
Should the duke frown, should arguments and prayers,
Nay, tears if need be, prove in vain, — who cares?
We leave the duke to his obduracy,
Companionless, — you, madam, follow me
Without, where divers of the body-guard
Wait signal to enforce the king's award
Of strict seclusion: over you at least
Vibratingly the sceptre threats increased
Precipitation! How avert its crash?"

IX.

"Re-enter, sir! A hand that's calm, not rash,
Averts it!" quietly the lady said.
"Yourself shall witness."
At the table's head
Where, mid the hushed guests, still the duke sat glued
In blank bewilderment, his spouse pursued
Her speech to end — syllabled quietude.

X.

"Duke, I, your duchess of a day, could take
The hand you proffered me for love's sole sake,
Conscious my love matched yours; as you, myself
Would waive, when need were, all but love — from pelf
To potency. What fortune brings about
Haply in some far future, finds me out,
Faces me on a sudden here and now.
The better! Read — if beating heart allow —
Read this, and bid me rend to rags the shame!

I and your conscience — hear and grant our claim !
Never dare alienate God's gift you hold
Simply in trust for him ! Choose muck for gold ?
Could you so stumble in your choice, cajoled
By what I count my least of worthiness
— The youth, the beauty, — you renounce them — yes,
With all that 's most too : love as well you lose,
Slain by what slays in you the honor ! Choose ! 200
Dear — yet my husband — dare I love you yet ? "

XI.

How the duke's wrath o'erboiled, — words, words and yet
More words, — I spare you such fool's fever-fret.
They were not of one sort at all, one size,
As souls go — he and she. 'T is said, the eyes
Of all the lookers-on let tears fall fast.
The minister was mollified at last :
" Take a day, — two days even, ere through pride
You perish, — two days' counsel — then decide ! "

XII.

— " If I shall save his honor and my soul ? 210
Husband, — this one last time, — you tear the scroll ?
Farewell, duke ! Sir, I follow in your train ! "

XIII.

So she went forth : they never met again,
The duke and she. The world paid compliment
(Is it worth noting ?) when, next day, she sent
Certain gifts back — " jewelry fit to deck
Whom you call wife." I know not round what neck
They took to sparkling, in good time — weeks thence.

XIV.

Of all which was the pleasant consequence,
So much and no more — that a fervid youth,
Big-hearted boy, — but ten years old, in truth, —
Laid this to heart and loved, as boyhood can,
The unduchessed lady: boy and lad grew man:
He loved as man perchance may: did meanwhile
Good soldier-service, managed to beguile
The years, no few, until he found a chance:
Then, as at trumpet-summons to advance,
Outbroke the love that stood at arms so long,
Brooked no withstanding longer. They were wed.
Whereon from camp and court alike he fled,
Renounced the sun-king, dropped off into night,
Evermore lost, a ruined satellite:
And, oh, the exquisite deliciousness
That lapped him in obscurity! You guess
Such joy is fugitive: she died full soon.
He did his best to die — as sun, so moon
Left him, turned dusk to darkness absolute.
Failing of death — why, saintship seemed to suit:
Yes, your sort, Don! He trembled on the verge
Of monkhood: trick of cowl and taste of scourge
He tried: then, kicked not at the pricks perverse,
But took again, for better or for worse,
The old way in the world, and, much the same
Man o' the outside, fairly played life's game.

XV.

"Now, Saint Scholastica, what time she fared
In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared
Right in her path! Her waist she promptly strips
Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,
And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's court

Leads him." Ay, many a legend of the sort
Do you praiseworthily authenticate:
Spare me the rest. This much of no debate
Admits: my lady flourished in grand days
When to be duchess was to dance the hays
Up, down, across the heaven amid its host:
While to be hailed the sun's own self almost —
So close the kinship — was — was —

Saint, for this,
Be yours the feet I stoop to — kneel and kiss!
So human? Then the mouth too, if you will!
Thanks to no legend but a chronicle.

XVI.

One leans to like the duke, too: up we'll patch
Some sort of saintship for him — not to match
Hers — but man's best and woman's worst amount
So nearly to the same thing, that we count
In man a miracle of faithfulness
If, while unfaithful somewhat, he lay stress
On the main fact that love, when love indeed,
Is wholly solely love from first to last —
Truth — all the rest a lie. Too likely, fast
Enough that necklace went to grace the throat
— Let's say, of such a dancer as makes doat
The senses when the soul is satisfied —
Trogalia, say the Greeks — a sweetmeat tried
Approvingly by sated tongue and teeth,
Once body's proper meal consigned beneath
Such unconsidered munching.

XVII.

Fancy's flight
Makes me a listener when, some sleepless night,

The duke reviewed his memories, and aghast
Found that the Present intercepts the Past
With such effect as when a cloud enwraps
The moon and, moon-suffused, plays moon perhaps
To who walks under, till comes, late or soon,
A stumble: up he looks, and lo, the moon
Calm, clear, convincingly herself once more!
How could he 'scape the cloud that thrust between
Him and effulgence? Speak, fool — duke, I mean!

XVIII.

"Who bade you come, brisk-marching bold she-shape,
A terror with those black-balled worlds of eyes,
That black hair bristling solid-built from nape
To crown it coils about? O dread surmise!
Take, tread on, trample under past escape
Your capture, spoil and trophy! Do — devise
Insults for one who, fallen once, ne'er shall rise!

"Mock on, triumphant o'er the prostrate shame!
Laugh 'Here lies he among the false to Love —
Love's loyal liegeman once: the very same
Who, scorning his weak fellows, towered above
Inconstancy: yet why his faith defame?
Our eagle's victor was at least no dove,
No dwarfish knight picked up our giant's glove —

"'When, putting prowess to the proof, faith urged
Her champion to the challenge: had it chanced
That merely virtue, wisdom, beauty — merged
All in one woman — merely these advanced
Their claim to conquest, — hardly had he purged
His mind of memories, dearnesses enhanced
Rather than harmed by death, nor, disentranced,

"'Promptly had he abjured the old pretence
To prove his kind's superior — first to last
Display erect on his heart's eminence
An altar to the never-dying Past.
For such feat faith might boast fit play of fence
And easily disarm the iconoclast
Called virtue, wisdom, beauty : impudence

"'Fought in their stead, and how could faith but fall ?
There came a bold she-shape brisk-marching, bent
No inch of her imperious stature, tall
As some war-engine from whose top was sent
One shattering volley out of eye's black ball,
And prone lay faith's defender !' Mockery spent ?
Malice discharged in full ? In that event,

"My queenly impudence, I cover close,
I wrap me round with love of your black hair,
Black eyes, black every wicked inch of those
Limbs' war-tower tallness : so much truth lives there
'Neath the dead heap of lies. And yet — who knows ?
What if such things are ? No less, such things were.
Then was the man your match whom now you dare

"Treat as existent still. A second truth !
They held — this heap of lies you rightly scorn —
A man who had approved himself in youth
More than a match for — you ? for sea-foam-born
Venus herself: you conquer him forsooth ?
'T is me his ghost : he died since left and lorn,
As needs must Samson when his hair is shorn.

"Some day, and soon, be sure himself will rise,
Called into life by her who long ago
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-disguise.
Ghosts tired of waiting can play tricks, you know!
Tread, trample me — such sport we ghosts devise,
Waiting the morn-star's re-appearance — though
You think we vanish scared by the cock's crow."

WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART.

I.

It seems as if . . . or did the actual chance
Startle me and perplex? Let truth be said!
How might this happen? Dreaming, blindfold led
By visionary hand, did soul's advance
Precede my body's, gain inheritance
Of fact by fancy — so that when I read
At length with waking eyes your Song, instead
Of mere bewilderment, with me first glance
Was but full recognition that in trance
Or merely thought's adventure some old day
Of dim and done-with boyishness, or — well,
Why might it not have been, the miracle
Broke on me as I took my sober way
Through veritable regions of our earth
And made discovery, many a wondrous one?

II.

Anyhow, fact or fancy, such its birth:
I was exploring some huge house, had gone
Through room and room complacently, no dearth
Anywhere of the signs of decent taste,
Adequate culture: wealth had run to waste

Nowise, nor penury was proved by stint:
All showed the Golden Mean without a hint
Of brave extravagance that breaks the rule.
The master of the mansion was no fool
Assuredly, no genius just as sure!
Safe mediocrity had scorned the lure
Of now too much and now too little cost,
And satisfied me sight was never lost
Of moderate design's accomplishment
In calm completeness. On and on I went,
With no more hope than fear of what came next,
Till lo, I push a door, sudden uplift
A hanging, enter, chance upon a shift
Indeed of scene! So — thus it is thou deck'st,
High heaven, our low earth's brick-and-mortar work?

III.

It was the Chapel. That a star, from murk
Which hid, should flashingly emerge at last,
Were small surprise: but from broad day I passed
Into a presence that turned shine to shade.
There fronted me the Rafael Mother-Maid,
Never to whom knelt votarist in shrine
By Nature's bounty helped, by Art's divine
More varied — beauty with magnificence —
Than this: from floor to roof one evidence
Of how far earth may rival heaven. No niche
Where glory was not prisoned to enrich
Man's gaze with gold and gems, no space but glowed
With color, gleamed with carving — hues which owed
Their outburst to a brush the painter fed
With rainbow-substance — rare shapes never wed
To actual flesh and blood, which, brain-born once,
Became the sculptor's dowry, Art's response

To earth's despair. And all seemed old yet new:
Youth, — in the marble's curve, the canvas' hue,
Apparent, — wanted not the crowning thrill
Of age the consecrator. Hands long still
Had worked here — could it be, what lent them skill
Retained a power to supervise, protect,
Enforce new lessons with the old, connect
Our life with theirs? No merely modern touch
Told me that here the artist, doing much,
Elsewhere did more, perchance does better, lives —
So needs must learn.

IV.

Well, these provocatives
Having fulfilled their office, forth I went
Big with anticipation — well-nigh fear —
Of what next room and next for startled eyes
Might have in store, surprise beyond surprise.
Next room and next and next — what followed here?
Why, nothing! not one object to arrest
My passage — everywhere too manifest
The previous decent null and void of best
And worst, mere ordinary right and fit,
Calm commonplace which neither missed, nor hit
Inch-high, inch-low, the placid mark proposed.

V.

Armed with this instance, have I diagnosed
Your case, my Christopher? The man was sound
And sane at starting: all at once the ground
Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
In conflagration. Then — as heaven were loth

To linger — let earth understand too well
How heaven at need can operate — off fell
The flame-robe, and the untransfigured man
Resumed sobriety, — as he began,
So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

VI.

Now, what I fain would know is — could it be
That he — whoe'er he was that furnished forth
The Chapel, making thus, from South to North,
Rafael touch Leighton, Michelagnolo
Join Watts, was found but once combining so
The elder and the younger, taking stand
On Art's supreme, — or that yourself who sang
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-clang,
And stations you for once on either hand
With Milton and with Keats, empowered to claim
Affinity on just one point — (or blame
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you full) —
How came it you resume the void and null,
Subside to insignificance, — live, die
— Proved plainly two mere mortals who drew nigh
One moment — that, to Art's best hierarchy,
This, to the superhuman poet-pair?
What if, in one point only, then and there
The otherwise all-unapproachable
Allowed impingement? Does the sphere pretend
To span the cube's breadth, cover end to end
The plane with its embrace? No, surely! Still,
Contact is contact, sphere's touch no whit less
Than cube's superimposure. Such success
Befell Smart only out of throngs between
Milton and Keats that donned the singing-dress —
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the screen

'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul, —
Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal
Live from the censer — shapely or uncouth,
Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of truth
Undeadened by a lie, — (you have my mind) —
For, think ! this blaze outleapt with black behind
And blank before, when Hayley and the rest . . .
But let the dead successors worst and best
Bury their dead : with life be my concern —
Yours with the fire-flame : what I fain would learn
Is just — (suppose me haply ignorant
Down to the common knowledge, doctors vaunt)
Just this — why only once the fire-flame was :
No matter if the marvel came to pass
The way folk judged — if power too long suppressed
Broke loose and maddened, as the vulgar guessed,
Or simply brain-disorder (doctors said),
A turmoil of the particles disturbed
Brain's workaday performance in your head,
Spurred spirit to wild action health had curbed :
And so verse issued in a cataract
Whence prose, before and after, unperturbed
Was wont to wend its way. Concede the fact
That here a poet was who always could —
Never before did — never after would —
Achieve the feat : how were such fact explained ?

VII.

Was it that when, by rarest chance, there fell
Disguise from Nature, so that Truth remained
Naked, and whoso saw for once could tell
Us others of her majesty and might
In large, her lovelinesses infinite

In little, — straight you used the power wherewith
Sense, penetrating as through rind to pith
Each object, thoroughly revealed might view
And comprehend the old things thus made new,
So that while eye saw, soul to tongue could trust
Thing which struck word out, and once more adjust
Real vision to right language, till heaven's vault
Pompous with sunset, storm-stirred sea's assault
On the swilled rock-ridge, earth's embosomed brood
Of tree and flower and weed, with all the life
That flies or swims or crawls, in peace or strife,
Above, below, — each had its note and name
For Man to know by, — Man who, now — the same
As erst in Eden, needs that all he sees
Be named him ere he note by what degrees
Of strength and beauty to its end Design
Ever thus operates — (your thought and mine,
No matter for the many dissident) —
So did you sing your Song, so truth found vent
In words for once with you ?

VIII.

Then — back was furled
The robe thus thrown aside, and straight the world
Darkened into the old oft-catalogued
Repository of things that sky, wave, land,
Or show or hide, clear late, accretion-clogged
Now, just as long ago, by tellings and
Re-tellings to satiety, which strike
Muffled upon the ear's drum. Very like
None was so startled as yourself when friends
Came, hailed your fast-returning wits : " Health mends
Importantly, for — to be plain with you —
This scribble on the wall was done — in lieu

Of pen and paper — with — ha, ha! — your key
Denting it on the wainscot! Do you see
How wise our caution was? Thus much we stopped
Of babble that had else grown print: and lopped
From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough — 180
Smart's who translated Horace! Write us now" . . .
Why, what Smart did write — never afterward
One line to show that he, who paced the sward,
Had reached the zenith from his madhouse cell.

IX.

Was it because you judged (I know full well
You never had the fancy) — judged — as some —
That who makes poetry must reproduce
Thus ever and thus only, as they come,
Each strength, each beauty, everywhere diffuse
Throughout creation, so that eye and ear, 190
Seeing and hearing, straight shall recognize,
At touch of just a trait, the strength appear, —
Suggested by a line's lapse see arise
All evident the beauty, — fresh surprise
Startling at fresh achievement? "So, indeed,
Wallows the whale's bulk in the waste of brine,
Nor otherwise its feather-tufts make fine
Wild Virgin's Bower when stars faint off to seed!"
(My prose — your poetry I dare not give,
Purpling too much my mere gray argument.) 200
— Was it because you judged — when fugitive
Was glory found, and wholly gone and spent
Such power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye,
At truth's appearance, — that you humbly bent
The head and, bidding vivid work good-by,
Doffed lyric dress and trod the world once more
A drab-clothed decent proseman as before?

Strengths, beauties, by one word's flash thus laid bare
— That was effectual service : made aware
Of strengths and beauties, Man but hears the text,
Awaits your teaching. Nature ? What comes next ?
Why all the strength and beauty ? — to be shown
Thus in one word's flash, thenceforth let alone
By Man who needs must deal with aught that 's known
Never so lately and so little ? Friend,
First give us knowledge, then appoint its use !
Strength, beauty are the means : ignore their end ?
As well you stopped at proving how profuse
Stones, sticks, nay stubble lie to left and right
Ready to help the builder, — careless quite
If he should take, or leave the same to strew
Earth idly, — as by word's flash bring in view
Strength, beauty, then bid who beholds the same
Go on beholding. Why gains unemployed ?
Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed
First ; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,
Instruction — haply leaving joy behind :
And you, the instructor, would you slack pursuit
Of the main prize, as poet help mankind
Just to enjoy, there leave them ? Play the fool,
Abjuring a superior privilege ?
Please simply when your function is to rule —
By thought incite to deed ? From edge to edge
Of earth's round, strength and beauty everywhere
Pullulate — and must you particularize
All, each and every apparition ? Spare
Yourself and us the trouble ! Ears and eyes
Want so much strength and beauty, and no less
Nor more, to learn life's lesson by. Oh, yes —
The other method 's favored in our day !
The end ere the beginning : as you may,

Master the heavens before you study earth,
Make you familiar with the meteor's birth
Ere you descend to scrutinize the rose !
I say, o'erstep no least one of the rows
That lead man from the bottom where he plants
Foot first of all, to life's last ladder-top :
Arrived there, vain enough will seem the vaunts
Of those who say — " We scale the skies, then drop
To earth — to find, how all things there are loth
To answer heavenly law : we understand
The meteor's course, and lo, the rose's growth —
How other than should be by law's command ! "
Would not you tell such — " Friends, beware lest fume
Offuscate sense : learn earth first ere presume
To teach heaven legislation. Law must be
Active in earth or nowhere : earth you see, —
Or there or not at all, Will, Power and Love
Admit discovery, — as below, above
Seek next law's confirmation ! But reverse
The order, where 's the wonder things grow worse
Than, by the law your fancy formulates,
They should be ? Cease from anger at the fates
Which thwart themselves so madly. Live and learn,
Not first learn and then live, is our concern.

WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON.

I.

Ah, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe, — no,
Yours was the wrong way ! — always understand,
Supposing that permissibly you planned
How statesmanship — your trade — in outward show
Might figure as inspired by simple zeal

For serving country, king, and commonweal,
(Though service tire to death the body, tease
The soul from out an o'ertasked patriot-drudge)
And yet should prove zeal's outward show agrees
In all respects — right reason being judge —
With inward care that, while the statesman spends
Body and soul thus freely for the sake
Of public good, his private welfare take
No harm by such devotedness. Intends
Scripture aught else — let captious folk inquire —
Which teaches "Laborers deserve their hire,
And who neglects his household bears the bell
Away of sinning from an infidel"?
Wiselier would fools that carp bestow a thought
How birds build nests; at outside, roughly wrought,
Twig knots with twig, loam plasters up each chink,
Leaving the inmate rudely lodged — you think?
Peep but inside! That specious rude-and-rough
Covers a domicile where downy fluff
Embeds the ease-deserving architect,
Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect
'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the teeth
Of wind and weather, guard what swung beneath
From upset only, but contrived himself
A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek.
Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek
How nature prompts each volatile! Thus — pelf
Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging, power
Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace
Robuster heart-beats: rock, not tree nor tower,
Contents the building eagle: rook shoves close
To brother rook on branch, while crow morose
Apart keeps balance perched on topmost bough.
No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow:

Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the bower —
His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet
The lacking instance when at loss to get
A feathered parallel to what we find
The secret motor of some mighty mind
That worked such wonders — all for vanity !
Worked them to haply figure in the eye
Of intimates as first of — doers' kind ?
Actors', that work in earnest sportively,
Paid by a sourish smile. How says the Sage ?
Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
Whereon to pose and posture and engage
The priceless female simper.

II.

I have gone
Thus into detail, George Bubb Dodington,
Lest, when I take you presently to task
For the wrong way of working, you should ask
" What fool conjectures that profession means
Performance ? that who goes behind the scenes
Finds, — acting over, — still the soot-stuff screens
Othello's visage, still the self-same cloak's
Bugle-bright-blackness half reveals half chokes
Hamlet's emotion, as ten minutes since ? "
No, each resumes his garb, stands — Moor or prince —
Decently draped : just so with statesmanship
All outside show, in short, is sham — why wince ?
Concede me — while our parley lasts ! You trip
Afterwards — lay but this to heart ! (there lurks
Somewhere in all of us a lump which irks
Somewhat the sprightliest-scheming brain that 's bent

On brave adventure, would but heart consent!)
— Here trip you, that — your aim allowed as right —
Your means thereto were wrong. Come, we, this night,
Profess one purpose, hold one principle,
Are at odds only as to — not the will
But way of winning solace for ourselves
— No matter if the ore for which zeal delves
Be gold or coprolite, while zeal's pretence
Is — we do good to men at — whose expense
But ours? who tire the body, tease the soul,
Simply that, running, we may reach fame's goal
And wreathe at last our brows with bay — the State's
Disinterested slaves, nay — please the Fates —
Saviours and nothing less: such lot has been!
Statesmanship triumphs pedestalled, serene, —
O happy consummation! — brought about
By managing with skill the rabble-rout
For which we labor (never mind the name —
People or populace, for praise or blame)
Making them understand — their heaven, their hell,
Their every hope and fear is ours as well.
Man's cause — what other can we have at heart?
Whence follows that the necessary part
High o'er Man's head we play, — and freelier breathe
Just that the multitude which gasps beneath
May reach the level where unstifled stand
Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,
Assist the prostrate public. 'T is by right
Merely of such pretence, we reach the height
Where storms abound, to brave — nay, court their stress,
Though all too well aware — of pomp the less,
Of peace the more! But who are we, to spurn
For peace' sake, duty's pointing? Up, then — earn

Albeit no prize we may but martyrdom !
Now, such fit height to launch salvation from,
How get and gain ? Since help must needs be craved
By would-be saviours of the else-unsaved,
How coax them to co-operate, lend a lift,
Kneel down and let us mount ?

III.

You say "Make shift
By sham — the harsh word : preach and teach, persuade
Somehow the Public — not despising aid
Of salutary artifice — we seek
Solely their good : our strength would raise the weak,
Our cultivated knowledge supplement
Their rudeness, rawness : why to us were lent
Ability except to come in use ?
Who loves his kind must by all means induce
That kind to let his love play freely, press
In Man's behalf to full performance ! "

IV.

Yes —
Yes, George, we know ! — whereat they hear, believe,
And bend the knee, and on the neck receive
Who fawned and cringed to purpose ? Not so, George !
Try simple falsehood on shrewd folk who forge
Lies of superior fashion day by day
And hour by hour ? With craftsmen versed as they
What chance of competition when the tools
Only a novice wields ? Are knaves such fools ?
Disinterested patriots, spare your tongue
The tones thrice-silvery, cheek save smiles it flung
Pearl-like profuse to swine — a herd, whereof

No unit needs be taught, his neighbor's trough
Scarce holds for who but grunts and whines the husks
Due to a wrinkled snout that shows sharp tusks.
No animal — much less our lordly Man —
Obeys its like: with strength all rule began,
The stoutest awes the pasture. Soon succeeds
Discrimination, — nicer power Man needs
To rule him than is bred of bone and thew:
Intelligence must move strength's self. This too
Lasts but its time: the multitude at length
Looks inside for intelligence and strength
And finds them here and there to pick and choose:
"All at your service, mine, see!" Ay, but who 's
My George, at this late day, to make his boast
"In strength, intelligence, I rule the roast,
Beat, all and some, the ungraced who crowd your ranks?"
"Oh, but I love, would lead you, gain your thanks
By unexampled yearning for Man's sake —
Passion that solely waits your help to take
Effect in action!" George, which one of us
But holds with his own heart communion thus:
"I am, if not of men the first and best,
Still — to receive enjoyment — properest:
Which since by force I cannot, nor by wit
Most likely — craft must serve in place of it.
Flatter, cajole! If so I bring within
My net the gains which wit and force should win,
What hinders?" 'T is a trick we know of old:
Try, George, some other of tricks manifold!
The multitude means mass and mixture — right
Are mixtures simple, pray, or composite?
Dive into Man, your medley: see the waste!
Sloth-stifled genius, energy disgraced

By ignorance, high aims with sorry skill,
Will without means and means in want of will
— Sure we might fish, from out the mothers' sons
That welter thus, a dozen Dodingtons!
Why call up Dodington, and none beside,
To take his seat upon our backs and ride
As statesman conquering and to conquer? Well,
The last expedient, which must needs excel
Those old ones — this it is, — at any rate
To-day's conception thus I formulate:
As simple force has been replaced, just so
Must simple wit be: men have got to know
Such wit as what you boast is nowise held
The wonder once it was, but, paralleled
Too plentifully, counts not, — puts to shame
Modest possessors like yourself who claim,
By virtue of it merely, power and place
— Which means the sweets of office. Since our race
Teems with the like of you, some special gift,
Your very own, must coax our hands to lift,
And backs to bear you: is it just and right
To privilege your nature?

V.

"State things quite
Other than so" — make answer! "I pretend
No such community with men. Perpend
My key to domination! Who would use
Man for his pleasure needs must introduce
The element that awes Man. Once for all,
His nature owns a Supernatural
In fact as well as phrase — which found must be
— Where, in this doubting age? Old mystery
Has served its turn — seen through and sent adrift

To nothingness: new wizard-craft makes shift
Nowadays shorn of help by robe and book, —
Otherwise, elsewhere, for success must look
Than chalked-ring, incantation-gibberish.
Somebody comes to conjure: that's he? Pish!
He's like the roomful of rapt gazers, — there's
No sort of difference in the garb he wears
From ordinary dressing, — gesture, speech,
Deportment, just like those of all and each
That eye their master of the minute. Stay!
What of the something — call it how you may —
Uncanny in the — quack? That's easy said!
Notice how the Professor turns no head
And yet takes cognizance of who accepts,
Denies, is puzzled as to the adept's
Supremacy, yields up or lies in wait
To trap the trickster! Doubtless, out of date
Are dealings with the devil: yet, the stir
Of mouth, its smile half smug half sinister,
Mock-modest boldness masked in diffidence, —
What if the man have — who knows how or whence? —
Confederate potency unguessed by us —
Prove no such cheat as he pretends?"

VI.

Ay, thus
Had but my George played statesmanship's new card
That carries all! "Since we" — avers the Bard —
"All of us have one human heart" — as good
As say — by all of us is understood
Right and wrong, true and false — in rough, at least,
We own a common conscience. God, man, beast —
How should we qualify the statesman-shape
I fancy standing with our world agape?

Disguise, flee, fight against with tooth and nail
The outrageous designation! "Quack" men quail
Before? You see, a little year ago
They heard him thunder at the thing which, lo,
To-day he vaunts for unscathed, while what erst
Heaven-high he lauded, lies hell-low, accursed!
And yet where 's change? Who, awe-struck, cares to point
Critical finger at a dubious joint
In armor, true *æs triplex*, breast and back
Binding about, defiant of attack,
An imperturbability that 's — well,
Or innocence or impudence — how tell
One from the other? Could ourselves broach lies,
Yet brave mankind with those unaltered eyes,
Those lips that keep the quietude of truth?
Dare we attempt the like? What quick uncouth
Disturbance of thy smug economy,
O coward visage! Straight would all descry
Back on the man's brow the boy's blush once more!
No: he goes deeper — could our sense explore —
Finds conscience beneath conscience such as ours.
Genius is not so rare, — prodigious powers —
Well, others boast such, — but a power like this
Mendacious intrepidity — *quid vis?*
Besides, imposture plays another game,
Admits of no diversion from its aim
Of captivating hearts, sets zeal a-flare
In every shape at every turn, — nowhere
Allows subsidence into ash. By stress
Of what does guile succeed but earnestness,
Earnest word, look and gesture? Touched with aught
But earnestness, the levity were fraught
With ruin to guile's film-work. Grave is guile;

Here no act wants its qualifying smile,
Its covert pleasantry to neutralize
The outward ardor. Can our chief despise
Even while most he seems to adulate?
As who should say "What though it be my fate
To deal with fools? Among the crowd must lurk
Some few with faculty to judge my work
Spite of its way which suits, they understand,
The crass majority: — the Sacred Band,
No duping them forsooth!" So tells a touch
Of subintelligential nod and wink —
Turning foes friends. Coarse flattery moves the gorge:
Mine were the mode to awe the many, George!
They guess you half despise them while most bent
On demonstrating that your sole intent
Strives for their service. Sneer at them? Yourself
'T is you disparage, — tricksy as an elf,
Scorning what most you strain to bring to pass,
Laughingly careless, — triply cased in brass, —
While pushing strenuous to the end in view.
What follows? Why, you formulate within
The vulgar headpiece this conception "Win
A master-mind to serve us needs we must,
One who, from motives we but take on trust,
Acts strangelier — haply wiselier than we know —
Stronglier, for certain. Did he say 'I throw
Aside my good for yours, in all I do
Care nothing for myself and all for you' —
We should both understand and disbelieve:
Said he 'Your good I laugh at in my sleeve,
My own it is I solely labor at,
Pretending yours the while' — that, even that
We, understanding well, give credence to,
And so will none of it. But here 't is through

Our recognition of his service, wage
Well earned by work, he mounts to such a stage
Above competitors as all save Bubb
Would agonize to keep. Yet, — here 's the rub —
So slightly does he hold by our esteem
Which solely fixed him fast there, that we seem
Mocked every minute to our face, by gibe
And jest — scorn insuppressive: what ascribe
The rashness to? Our pay and praise to boot —
Do these avail him to tread underfoot
Something inside us all and each, that stands
Somehow instead of somewhat which commands
'Lie not'? Folk fear to jeopardize their soul,
Stumble at times, walk straight upon the whole, —
That 's nature's simple instinct: what may be
The portent here, the influence such as we
Are strangers to?" —

VII.

Exact the thing I call
Man's despot, just the Supernatural
Which, George, was wholly out of — far beyond
Your theory and practice. You had conned
But to reject the precept "To succeed
In gratifying selfishness and greed,
Asseverate such qualities exist
Nowise within yourself! then make acquist
By all means, with no sort of fear!" Alack,
That well-worn lie is obsolete! Fall back
On still a working pretext — "Hearth and Home,
The Altar, love of England, hate of Rome" —
That 's serviceable lying — that perchance
Had screened you decently: but 'ware advance
By one step more in perspicacity

Of these our dupes! At length they get to see
As through the earlier, this the latter plea —
And find the greed and selfishness at source!
Ventum est ad triarios: last resource
Should be to what but — exquisite disguise
Disguise-abjuring, truth that looks like lies,
Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief?
Say — you hold in contempt — not them in chief —
But first and foremost your own self! No use
In men but to make sport for you, induce
The puppets now to dance, now stand stock-still,
Now knock their heads together, at your will
For will's sake only — while each plays his part
Submissive: why? through terror at the heart:
"Can it be — this bold man, whose hand we saw
Openly pull the wires, obeys some law
Quite above Man's — nay, God's?" On face fall they.
This was the secret missed, again I say,
Out of your power to grasp conception of,
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the scoff
That greets your very name: folk see but one
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington.

WITH FRANCIS FURINI.

1.

Nay, *that*, Furini, never I at least
Mean to believe! What man you were I know,
While you walked Tuscan earth, a painter-priest,
Something about two hundred years ago.
Priest — you did duty punctual as the sun
That rose and set above Saint Sano's church,

Blessing Mugello : of your flock not one
But showed a whiter fleece because of smirch,
Your kind hands wiped it clear from : were they poor?
Bounty broke bread apace, — did marriage lag
For just the want of moneys that ensure
Fit hearth-and-home provision ? — straight your bag
Unplumped itself, — reached hearts by way of palms
Goodwill's shake had but tickled. All about
Mugello valley, felt some parish qualms
At worship offered in bare walls without
The comfort of a picture ? — prompt such need
Our painter would supply, and throngs to see
Witnessed that goodness — no unholy greed
Of gain — had coaxed from Don Furini — he
Whom princes might in vain implore to toil
For worldly profit — such a masterpiece.
Brief — priest, you poured profuse God's wine and oil
Praiseworthily, I know : shall praising cease
When, priestly vesture put aside, mere man,
You stand for judgment ? Rather — what acclaim
— " Good son, good brother, friend in whom we scan
No fault nor flaw " — salutes Furini's name,
The loving as the liberal ! Enough :
Only to ope a lily, though for sake
Of setting free its scent, disturbs the rough
Loose gold about its anther. I shall take
No blame in one more blazon, last of all —
Good painter were you : if in very deed
I styled you great — what modern art dares call
My word in question ? Let who will take heed
Of what he seeks and misses in your brain
To balance that precision of the brush
Your hand could ply so deftly : all in vain

Strives poet's power for outlet when the push
Is lost upon a barred and bolted gate
Of painter's impotency. Agnolo —
Thine were alike the head and hand, by fate
Doubly endowed! Who boasts head only — woe
To hand's presumption should brush emulate
Fancy's free passage by the pen, and show
Thought wrecked and ruined where the inexpert
Foolhardy fingers half grasped, half let go
Film-wings the poet's pen arrests unhurt!
No — painter such as that miraculous
Michael, who deems you? But the ample gift
Of gracing walls else blank of this our house
Of life with imagery, one bright drift
Poured forth by pencil, — man and woman mere,
Glorified till half owned for gods, — the dear
Fleshly perfection of the human shape, —
This was apportioned you whereby to praise
Heaven and bless earth. Who clumsily essays,
By slighting painter's craft, to prove the ape
Of poet's pen-creation, just betrays
Two-fold ineptitude.

II.

By such sure ways
Do I return, Furini, to my first
And central confidence — that he I proved
Good priest, good man, good painter, and rehearsed
Praise upon praise to show — not simply loved
For virtue, but for wisdom honored too
Needs must Furini be, — it follows — who
Shall undertake to breed in me belief
That, on his death-bed, weakness played the thief
With wisdom, folly ousted reason quite?

List to the chronicler ! With main and might —
So fame runs — did the poor soul beg his friends
To buy and burn his hand-work, make amends
For having reproduced therein — (Ah me !
Sighs fame — that 's friend Filippo) — nudity !
Yes, I assure you : he would paint — not men
Merely — a pardonable fault — but when
He had to deal with — oh, not mother Eve
Alone, permissibly in Paradise
Naked and unashamed, — but dared achieve
Dreadful distinction, at soul-safety's price
By also painting women — (why the need ?)
Just as God made them : there, you have the truth !
Yes, rosed from top to toe in flush of youth,
One foot upon the moss-fringe, would some Nymph
Try, with its venturous fellow, if the lymph
Were chillier than the slab-stepped fountain-edge ;
The while a-heap her garments on its ledge
Of boulder lay within hand's easy reach,
— No one least kid-skin cast around her ! Speech
Shrinks from enumerating case and case
Of — were it but Diana at the chase,
With tunic tucked discreetly hunting-high !
No, some Queen Venus set our necks awry,
Turned faces from the painter's all-too-frank
Triumph of flesh ! For — whom had he to thank
— This self-appointed nature-student ? Whence
Picked he up practice ? By what evidence
Did he unhandsomely become adept
In simulating bodies ? How except
By actual sight of such ? Himself confessed
The enormity : quoth Philip " When I pressed
The painter to acknowledge his abuse
Of artistry else potent — what excuse

Made the infatuated man? I give
His very words: 'Did you but know, as I,
— O scruple-splitting sickly-sensitive
Mild-moral-monger, what the agony
Of Art is ere Art satisfy herself
In imitating Nature — (Man, poor elf,
Striving to match the finger-mark of Him
The immeasurably matchless) — gay or grim,
Pray, would your smile be? Leave mere fools to tax
Art's high-strung brain's intentness as so lax
That, in its mid-throe, idle fancy sees
The moment for admittance!' Pleadings these —
Specious, I grant." So adds, and seems to wince
Somewhat, our censor — but shall truth convince
Blockheads like Baldinucci?

III.

I resume
My incredulity: your other kind
Of soul, Furini, never was so blind,
Even through death-mist, as to grope in gloom
For cheer beside a bonfire piled to turn
Ashes and dust all that your noble life
Did homage to life's Lord by, — bid them burn
— These Baldinucci blockheads — pictures rife
With record, in each rendered loveliness,
That one appreciative creature's debt
Of thanks to the Creator more or less,
Was paid according as heart's-will had met
Hand's-power in Art's endeavor to express
Heaven's most consummate of achievements, bless
Earth by a semblance of the seal God set
On woman his supremest work. I trust
Rather, Furini, dying breath had vent

In some fine fervor of thanksgiving just
For this — that soul and body's power you spent —
Agonized to adumbrate, trace in dust
That marvel which we dream the firmament
Copies in star-device when fancies stray
Outlining, orb by orb, Andromeda —
God's best of beauteous and magnificent
Revealed to earth — the naked female form.
Nay, I mistake not: wrath that's but lukewarm
Would boil indeed were such a critic styled
Himself an artist: artist! Ossa piled
Topping Olympus — the absurd which crowns
The extravagant — whereat one laughs, not frowns.
Paints he? One bids the poor pretender take
His sorry self, a trouble and disgrace,
From out the sacred presence, void the place
Artists claim only. What — not merely wake
Our pity that suppressed concupiscence —
A satyr masked as matron — makes pretence
To the coarse blue-fly's instinct — can perceive
No better reason why she should exist —
— God's lily-limbed and blush-rose-bosomed Eve —
Than as a hot-bed for the sensualist
To fly-blow with his fancies, make pure stuff
Breed him back filth — this were not crime enough?
But further — fly to style itself — nay, more —
To steal among the sacred ones, crouch down
Though but to where their garments sweep the floor —
— Still catching some faint sparkle from the crown
Crowning transcendent Michael, Leonard,
Rafael, — to sit beside the feet of such,
Unspurned because unnoticed, then reward
Their toleration — mercy overmuch —
By stealing from the throne-step to the fools

Curious outside the gateway, all-agape
To learn by what procedure, in the schools
Of Art, a merest man in outward shape
May learn to be Correggio! Old and young,
These learners got their lesson: Art was just
A safety-screen — (Art, which Correggio's tongue
Calls "Virtue") — for a skulking vice: mere lust
Inspired the artist when his Night and Morn
Slept and awoke in marble on that edge
Of heaven above our awestruck earth: lust-born
His Eve low bending took the privilege
Of life from what our eyes saw — God's own palm
That put the flame forth — to the love and thanks
Of all creation save this recreant!

IV.

Calm
Our phrase, Furini! Not the artist-ranks
Claim riddance of an interloper: no —
This Baldinucci did but grunt and sniff
Outside Art's pale — ay, grubbed, where pine-trees grow,
For pignuts only.

V.

You the Sacred! If
Indeed on you has been bestowed the dower
Of Art in fulness, graced with head and hand,
Head — to look up not downwards, hand — of power
To make head's gain the portion of a world
Where else the uninstructed ones too sure
Would take all outside beauty — film that's furled
About a star — for the star's self, endure
No guidance to the central glory, — nay,

(Sadder) might apprehend the film was fog,
Or (worst) wish all but vapor well away,
And sky's pure product thickened from earth's bog —
Since so, nor seldom, have your worthiest failed
To trust their own soul's insight — why? except
For warning that the head of the adept
May too much prize the hand, work unassailed
By scruple of the better sense that finds
An orb within each halo, bids gross flesh
Free the fine spirit-pattern, nor enmesh
More than is meet a marvel custom blinds
Only the vulgar eye to. Now, less fear
That you, the foremost of Art's fellowship,
Will oft — will ever so offend! But — hip
And thigh — smite the Philistine! *You* — slunk here —
Connived at, by too easy tolerance,
Not to scrape palette simply or squeeze brush,
But dub your very self an Artist? Tush —
You, of the daubings, is it, dare advance
This doctrine that the Artist-mind must needs
Own to affinity with yours — confess
Provocative acquaintance, more or less,
With each impurely-peevish worm that breeds
Inside your brain's receptacle?

VI.

Enough.
Who owns "I dare not look on diadems
Without an itch to pick out, purloin gems
Others contentedly leave sparkling" — gruff
Answers the guard of the regalia: "Why —
Consciously kleptomaniac — thrust yourself
Where your illicit craving after pelf
Is tempted most — in the King's treasury?

Go elsewhere! Sort with thieves, if thus you feel —
When folk clean-handed simply recognize
Treasure whereof the mere sight satisfies —
But straight your fingers are on itch to steal!
Hence with you!"

Pray, Furini!

VII.

"Bounteous God,
Deviser and Dispenser of all gifts
To soul through sense, — in Art the soul uplifts
Man's best of thanks! What but Thy measuring-rod
Meted forth heaven and earth? more intimate,
Thy very hands were busied with the task
Of making, in this human shape, a mask —
A match for that divine. Shall love abate
Man's wonder? Nowise! True — true — all too
true —
No gift but, in the very plenitude
Of its perfection, goes maimed, misconstrued
By wickedness or weakness: still, some few
Have grace to see Thy purpose, strength to mar
Thy work by no admixture of their own,
— Limn truth not falsehood, bid us love alone
The type untampered with, the naked star!"

VIII.

And, prayer done, painter — what if you should preach?
Not as of old when playing pulpiteer
To simple-witted country folk, but here
In actual London try your powers of speech
On us the cultured, therefore sceptical —
What would you? For, suppose he has his word
In faith's behalf, no matter how absurd,

This painter-theologian? One and all
We lend an ear — nay, Science takes thereto —
Encourages the meanest who has racked
Nature until he gains from her some fact,
To state what truth is from his point of view,
Mere pin-point though it be: since many such
Conduce to make a whole, she bids our friend
Come forward unabashed and haply lend
His little life-experience to our much
Of modern knowledge. Since she so insists,
Up stands Furini.

IX.

"Evolutionists!
At truth I glimpse from depths, you glance from heights,
Our stations for discovery opposites, —
How should ensue agreement? I explain:
'T is the tip-top of things to which you strain
Your vision, until atoms, protoplasm,
And what and whence and how may be the spasm
Which sets all going, stop you: down perforce
Needs must your observation take its course,
Since there 's no moving upwards: link by link
You drop to where the atoms somehow think,
Feel, know themselves to be: the world 's begun,
Such as we recognize it. Have you done
Descending? Here 's ourself, — Man, known to-day,
Duly evolved at last, — so far, you say,
The sum and seal of being's progress. Good!
Thus much at least is clearly understood —
Of power does Man possess no particle:
Of knowledge — just so much as shows that still
It ends in ignorance on every side:
But righteousness — ah, Man is deified

Thereby, for compensation! Make survey
Of Man's surroundings, try creation — nay,
Try emulation of the minimized
Minuteness fancy may conceive! Surprised
Reason becomes by two defeats for one —
Not only power at each phenomenon
Baffled, but knowledge also in default —
Asking what *is* minuteness — yonder vault
Speckled with suns, or this the millionth — thing,
How shall I call? — that on some insect's wing
Helps to make out in dyes the mimic star?
Weak, ignorant, accordingly we are:
What then? The worst for Nature! Where began
Righteousness, moral sense except in Man?
True, he makes nothing, understands no whit:
Had the initiator-spasm seen fit
Thus doubly to endow him, none the worse
And much the better were the universe.
What does Man see or feel or apprehend
Here, there, and everywhere, but faults to mend,
Omissions to supply, — one wide disease
Of things that are, which Man at once would ease
Had will but power and knowledge? failing both —
Things must take will for deed — Man, nowise loth,
Accepts pre-eminency: mere blind force —
Mere knowledge undirected in its course
By any care for what is made or marred
In either's operation — *these* award
The crown to? Rather let it deck thy brows,
Man, whom alone a righteousness endows
Would cure the wide world's ailing! Who disputes
Thy claim thereto? Had Spasm more attributes
Than power and knowledge in its gift, before
Man came to pass? The higher that we soar,

The less of moral sense like Man's we find :
No sign of such before, — what comes behind,
Who guesses ? But until there crown our sight
The quite new — not the old mere infinite
Of changings, — some fresh kind of sun and moon,
Then, not before, shall I expect a boon
Of intuition just as strange, which turns
Evil to good, and wrong to right, unlearns
All Man's experience learned since Man was he.
Accept in Man, advanced to this degree,
The Prime Mind, therefore ! neither wise nor strong —
Whose fault ? but were he both, then right, not wrong
As now, throughout the world were paramount
According to his will, — which I account
The qualifying faculty. He stands
Confessed supreme — the monarch whose commands
Could he enforce, how bettered were the world !
He 's at the height this moment — to be hurled
Next moment to the bottom by rebound
Of his own peal of laughter. All around
Ignorance wraps him, — whence and how and why
Things are, — yet cloud breaks and lets blink the sky
Just overhead, not elsewhere ! What assures
His optics that the very blue which lures
Comes not of black outside it, doubly dense ?
Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
So much and no more than lets through perhaps
The murmured knowledge — ' Ignorance exists.'

X.

" I at the bottom, Evolutionists,
Advise beginning, rather. I profess
To know just one fact — my self-consciousness, —

'Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled, —
Knowledge: before me was my Cause — that's styled
God: after, in due course succeeds the rest, —
All that my knowledge comprehends — at best —
At worst, conceives about in mild despair.
Light needs must touch on either darkness: where?
Knowledge so far impinges on the Cause
Before me, that I know — by certain laws
Wholly unknown, whate'er I apprehend
Within, without me, had its rise: thus blend
I, and all things perceived, in one Effect.
How far can knowledge any ray project
On what comes after me — the universe?
Well, my attempt to make the cloud disperse
Begins — not from above but underneath:
I climb, you soar, — who soars soon loses breath
And sinks, who climbs keeps one foot firm on fact
Ere hazarding the next step: soul's first act
(Call consciousness the soul — some name we need)
Getting itself aware, through stuff decreed
Thereto (so call the body) — who has stept
So far, there let him stand, become adept
In body ere he shift his station thence
One single hair's breadth. Do I make pretence
To teach, myself unskilled in learning? Lo,
My life's work! Let my pictures prove I know
Somewhat of what this fleshly frame of ours
Or is or should be, how the soul empowers
The body to reveal its every mood
Of love and hate, pour forth its plenitude
Of passion. If my hand attained to give
Thus permanence to truth else fugitive,
Did not I also fix each fleeting grace
Of form and feature — save the beauteous face —

Arrest decay in transitory might
Of bone and muscle — cause the world to bless
Forever each transcendent nakedness
Of man and woman? Were such feats achieved
By sloth, or strenuous labor unrelieved,
— Yet lavished vainly? Ask that underground
(So may I speak) of all on surface found
Of flesh-perfection! Depths on depths to probe
Of all-inventive artifice, disrobe
Marvel at hiding under marvel, pluck
Veil after veil from Nature — were the luck
Ours to surprise the secret men so name,
That still eludes the searcher — all the same,
Repays his search with still fresh proof — 'Externe,
Not inmost, is the Cause, fool! Look and learn!'
Thus teach my hundred pictures: firm and fast
There did I plant my first foot. And the next?
Nowhere! 'T was put forth and withdrawn, perplexed
At touch of what seemed stable and proved stuff
Such as the colored clouds are: plain enough
There lay the outside universe: try Man —
My most immediate! and the dip began
From safe and solid into that profound
Of ignorance I tell you surges round
My rock-spit of self-knowledge. Well and ill,
Evil and good irreconcilable
Above, beneath, about my every side, —
How did this wild confusion far and wide
Tally with my experience when my stamp —
So far from stirring — struck out, each a lamp,
Spark after spark of truth from where I stood —
Pedestalled triumph? Evil there was good,
Want was the promise of supply, defect
Ensured completion, — where and when and how?

Leave that to the First Cause! Enough that now,
Here where I stand, this moment's me and mine,
Shows me what is, permits me to divine
What shall be. Wherefore? Nay, how otherwise?
Look at my pictures! What so glorifies
The body that the permeating soul
Finds there no particle elude control
Direct, or fail of duty, — most obscure
When most subservient? Did that Cause ensure
The soul such raptures as its fancy stings
Body to furnish when, uplift by wings
Of passion, here and now, it leaves the earth,
Loses itself above, where bliss has birth —
(Heaven, be the phrase) — did that same Cause contrive
Such solace for the body, soul must dive
At drop of fancy's pinion, condescend
To bury both alike on earth, our friend
And fellow, where minutely exquisite
Low lie the pleasures, now and here — no herb
But hides its marvel, peace no doubts perturb
In each small mystery of insect life —
— Shall the soul's Cause thus gift the soul, yet strife
Continue still of fears with hopes, — for why?
What if the Cause, whereof we now descry
So far the wonder-working, lack at last
Will, power, benevolence — a protoplast,
No consummator, sealing up the sum
Of all things, — past and present and to come
Perfection? No, I have no doubt at all!
There 's my amount of knowledge — great or small,
Sufficient for my needs: for see! advance
Its light now on that depth of ignorance
I shrank before from — yonder where the world

Lies wreck-strewn, — evil towering, prone good — hurled
From pride of place, on every side. For me
(Patience, beseech you !) knowledge can but be
Of good by knowledge of good's opposite —
Evil, — since, to distinguish wrong from right,
Both must be known in each extreme, beside —
(Or what means knowledge — to aspire or bide
Content with half-attaining ? Hardly so !)
Made to know on, know ever, I must know
All to be known at any halting-stage
Of my soul's progress, such as earth, where wage
War, just for soul's instruction, pain with joy,
Folly with wisdom, all that works annoy
With all that quiets and contents, — in brief,
Good strives with evil.

"Now then for relief,
Friends, of your patience kindly curbed so long.
'What ?' snarl you, 'Is the fool's conceit thus strong —
Must the whole outside world in soul and sense
Suffer, that he grow sage at its expense ?'
By no means ! 'T is by merest touch of toe
I try — not trench on — ignorance, just know —
And so keep steady footing : how you fare,
Caught in the whirlpool — that 's the Cause's care,
Strong, wise, good, — this I know at any rate
In my own self, — but how may operate
With you — strength, wisdom, goodness — no least blink
Of knowledge breaks the darkness round me. Think !
Could I see plain, be somehow certified
All was illusion, — evil far and wide

Was good disguised, — why, out with one huge wipe
Goes knowledge from me. Type needs antitype:
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good
Needs evil: how were pity understood
Unless by pain? Make evident that pain
Permissibly masks pleasure — you abstain
From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves
A drowning fly. Who proffers help of hand
To weak Andromeda exposed on strand
At mercy of the monster? Were all true,
Help were not wanting: 'But 't is false,' cry you,
'Mere fancy-work of paint and brush!' No less,
Were mine the skill, the magic, to impress
Beholders with a confidence they saw
Life, — veritable flesh and blood in awe
Of just as true a sea-beast, — would they stare
Simply as now, or cry out, curse and swear,
Or call the gods to help, or catch up stick
And stone, according as their hearts were quick
Or sluggish? Well, some old artificer
Could do as much, — at least, so books aver, —
Able to make-believe, while I, poor wight,
Make-fancy, nothing more. Though wrong were right,
Could we but know — still wrong must needs seem wrong
To do right's service, prove men weak or strong,
Choosers of evil or of good. 'No such
Illusion possible!' Ah, friends, you touch
Just here my solid standing-place amid
The wash and welter, whence all doubts are bid
Back to the ledge they break against in foam,
Futility: my soul, and my soul's home
This body, — how each operates on each,
And how things outside, fact or feigning, teach

What good is and what evil, — just the same,
Be feigning or be fact the teacher, — blame
Diffidence nowise if, from this I judge
My point of vantage, not an inch I budge.
All — for myself — seems ordered wise and well
Inside it, — what reigns outside, who can tell?
Contrariwise, who needs be told 'The space
Which yields thee knowledge, — do its bounds embrace
Well-willing and wise-working, each at height?
Enough: beyond thee lies the infinite —
Back to thy circumscription!'

"Back indeed!
Ending where I began — thus: retrocede,
Who will, — what comes first, take first, I advise!
Acquaint you with the body ere your eyes
Look upward: this Andromeda of mine —
Gaze on the beauty, Art hangs out for sign
There 's finer entertainment underneath.
Learn how they ministrate to life and death —
Those incommensurably marvellous
Contrivances which furnish forth the house
Where soul has sway! Though Master keep aloof,
Signs of His presence multiply from roof
To basement of the building. Look around,
Learn thoroughly, — no fear that you confound
Master with messuage! He 's away, no doubt,
But what if, all at once, you come upon
A startling proof — not that the Master gone
Was present lately — but that something — whence
Light comes — has pushed Him into residence?
Was such the symbol's meaning, — old, uncouth —
That circle of the serpent, tail in mouth?

Only by looking low, ere looking high,
Comes penetration of the mystery."

XI.

Thanks! After sermonizing, psalmody!
Now praise with pencil, Painter! Fools attaint
Your fame, forsooth, because its power inclines
To livelier colors, more attractive lines
Than suit some orthodox sad sickly saint
— Gray male emaciation, haply streaked
Carmine by scourgings — or they want, far worse —
Some self-scathed woman, framed to bless not curse
Nature that loved the form whereon hate wreaked
The wrongs you see. No, rather paint some full
Benignancy, the first and foremost boon
Of youth, health, strength, — show beauty's May, ere June
Undo the bud's blush, leave a rose to cull
— No poppy, neither! yet less perfect-pure,
Divinely-precious with life's dew besprent.
Show saintliness that's simply innocent
Of guessing sinnership exists to cure
All in good time! In time let age advance
And teach that knowledge helps — not ignorance —
The healing of the nations. Let my spark
Quicken your tinder! Burn with — Joan of Arc!
Not at the end, nor midway when there grew
The brave delusions, when rare fancies flew
Before the eyes, and in the ears of her
Strange voices woke imperiously astir:
No, — paint the peasant girl all peasant-like,
Spirit and flesh — the hour about to strike
When this should be transfigured, that inflamed,
By heart's admonishing "Thy country shamed,

Thy king shut out of all his realm except
One sorry corner!" and to life forth leapt
The indubitable lightning "Can there be
Country and king's salvation — all through me?"
Memorize that burst's moment, Francis! Tush —
None of the nonsense-writing! Fitlier brush
Shall clear off fancy's film-work and let show
Not what the foolish feign but the wise know —
Ask Sainte-Beuve else! — or better, Quicherat,
The downright-digger into truth that 's — Bah,
Bettered by fiction? Well, of fact thus much
Concerns you, that "of prudishness no touch
From first to last defaced the maid; anon,
Camp-use compelling" — what says D'Alençon
Her fast friend? — "though I saw while she undressed
How fair she was — especially her breast —
Never had I a wild thought!" — as indeed
I nowise doubt. Much less would she take heed —
When eve came, and the lake, the hills around
Were all one solitude and silence, — found
Barriered impenetrably safe about, —
Take heed of interloping eyes shut out,
But quietly permit the air imbibe
Her naked beauty till . . . but hear the scribe!
Now as she fain would bathe, one even-tide,
God's maid, this Joan, from the pool's edge she spied
The fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher-king:
And "'Las," sighed she, "my Liege is such a thing
As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place
Out of his whole wide France: were mine the grace
To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird!"
Properly Martin-fisher — that 's the word,
Not yours nor mine: folk said the rustic oath
In common use with her was — "By my troth"?

No, — "By my Martin"! Paint this! Only, turn
Her face away — that face about to burn
Into an angel's when the time is ripe!
That task's beyond you. Finished, Francis? Wipe
Pencil, scrape palette, and retire content!
"*Omnia non omnibus*" — no harm is meant!

WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE.

I.

Ah, but — because you were struck blind, could bless
Your sense no longer with the actual view
Of man and woman, those fair forms you drew
In happier days so duteously and true, —
Must I account my Gerard de Lairesse
All sorrow-smitten? He was hindered too
— Was this no hardship? — from producing, plain
To us who still have eyes, the pageantry
Which passed and passed before his busy brain
And, captured on his canvas, showed our sky
Traversed by flying shapes, earth stocked with brood
Of monsters, — centaurs bestial, satyrs lewd, —
Not without much Olympian glory, shapes
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes
From the severe serene: or haply paced
The antique ways, god-counselled, nymph-embraced,
Some early human kingly personage.
Such wonders of the teeming poet's-age
Were still to be: nay, these indeed began —
Are not the pictures extant? — till the ban
Of blindness struck both palette from his thumb
And pencil from his finger.

II.

Blind — not dumb,
Else, Gerard, were my inmost bowels stirred
With pity beyond pity: no, the word
Was left upon your unmolested lips:
Your mouth unsealed, despite of eyes' eclipse,
Talked all brain's yearning into birth. I lack
Somehow the heart to wish your practice back
Which boasted hand's achievement in a score
Of veritable pictures, less or more,
Still to be seen: myself have seen them, — moved
To pay due homage to the man I loved
Because of that prodigious book he wrote
On Artistry's Ideal, by taking note,
Making acquaintance with his artist-work.
So my youth's piety obtained success
Of all-too dubious sort: for, though it irk
To tell the issue, few or none would guess
From extant lines and colors, De Lairesse,
Your faculty, although each deftly-grouped
And aptly-ordered figure-piece was judged
Worthy a prince's purchase in its day.
Bearded experience bears not to be duped
Like boyish fancy: 'twas a boy that budged
No foot's breadth from your visioned steps away
The while that memorable "Walk" he trudged
In your companionship, — the Book must say
Where, when and whither, — "Walk," come what come may,
No measurer of steps on this our globe
Shall ever match for marvels. Faustus' robe,
And Fortunatus' cap were gifts of price:
But — oh, your piece of sober sound advice

That artists should descry abundant worth
In trivial commonplace, nor groan at dearth
If fortune bade the painter's craft be plied
In vulgar town and country! Why despond
Because hemmed round by Dutch canals? Beyond
The ugly actual, lo, on every side
Imagination's limitless domain
Displayed a wealth of wondrous sounds and sights
Ripe to be realized by poet's brain
Acting on painter's brush! "Ye doubt? Poor wights,
What if I set example, go before,
While you come after, and we both explore
Holland turned Dreamland, taking care to note
Objects whereto my pupils may devote
Attention with advantage?"

III.

So commenced
That "Walk" amid true wonders — none to you,
But huge to us ignobly common-sensed,
Purblind, while plain could proper optics view
In that old sepulchre by lightning split,
Whereof the lid bore carven, — any dolt
Imagines why, — Jove's very thunderbolt:
You who could straight perceive, by glance at it,
This tomb must needs be Phaeton's! In a trice,
Confirming that conjecture, close on hand,
Behold, half out, half in the ploughed-up sand,
A chariot-wheel explained its bolt-device:
What other than the Chariot of the Sun
Ever let drop the like? Consult the tome —
I bid inglorious tarriers-at-home —
For greater still surprise the while that "Walk"
Went on and on, to end as it begun,

Choke-full of chances, changes, every one
No whit less wondrous. What was there to balk
Us, who had eyes, from seeing? You with none
Missed not a marvel: wherefore? Let us talk.

IV.

Say am I right? Your sealed sense moved your mind,
Free from obstruction, to compassionate
Art's power left powerless, and supply the blind
With fancies worth all facts denied by fate.
Mind could invent things, and to — take away,
At pleasure, leave out trifles mean and base
Which vex the sight that cannot say them nay
But, where mind plays the master, have no place.
And bent on banishing was mind, be sure,
All except beauty from its mustered tribe
Of objects apparitional which lure
Painter to show and poet to describe —
That imagery of the antique song
Truer than truth's self. Fancy's rainbow-birth
Conceived mid clouds in Greece, could glance along
Your passage o'er Dutch veritable earth,
As with ourselves, who see, familiar throng
About our pacings men and women worth
Nowise a glance — so poets apprehend —
Since naught avails portraying them in verse:
While painters turn upon the heel, intend
To spare their work the critic's ready curse
Due to the daily and undignified.

V.

I who myself contentedly abide
Awake, nor want the wings of dream, — who tramp

Earth's common surface, rough, smooth, dry or damp,
— I understand alternatives, no less
— Conceive your soul's leap, Gerard de Lairesse!
How were it could I mingle false with true,
Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?
Advantage would it prove or detriment
If I saw double? Could I gaze intent
On Dryope plucking the blossoms red,
As you, whereat her lote-tree writhed and bled,
Yet lose no gain, no hard fast wide-awake
Having and holding nature for the sake
Of nature only — nymph and lote-tree thus
Gained by the loss of fruit not fabulous,
Apple of English homesteads, where I see
Nor seek more than crisp buds a struggling bee
Uncrumples, caught by sweet he clambers through?
Truly, a moot point: make it plain to me,
Who, bee-like, sate sense with the simply true,
Nor seek to heighten that sufficiency
By help of feignings proper to the page —
Earth's surface-blank whereon the elder age
Put color, poetizing — poured rich life
On what were else a dead ground — nothingness —
Until the solitary world grew rife
With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs. Yes,
The reason was, fancy composed the strife
'Twixt sense and soul: for sense, my De Lairesse,
Cannot content itself with outward things,
Mere beauty: soul must needs know whence there springs —
How, when and why — what sense but loves, nor lists
To know at all.

VI.

Not one of man's acquists
Ought he resignedly to lose, methinks :
So, point me out which was it of the links
Snapt first, from out the chain which used to bind
Our earth to heaven, and yet for you, since blind,
Subsisted still efficient and intact ?
Oh, we can fancy too ! but somehow fact
Has got to — say, not so much push aside
Fancy, as to declare its place supplied
By fact unseen but no less fact the same,
Which mind bids sense accept. Is mind to blame,
Or sense, — does that usurp, this abdicate ?
First of all, as you "walked" — were it too late
For us to walk, if so we willed ? Confess
We have the sober feet still, De Lairesse !
Why not the freakish brain too, that must needs
Supplement nature — not see flowers and weeds
Simply as such, but link with each and all
The ultimate perfection — what we call
Rightly enough the human shape divine ?
The rose ? No rose unless it disentwine
From Venus' wreath the while she bends to kiss
Her deathly love ?

VII.

Plain retrogression, this !
No, no : we poets go not back at all :
What you did we could do — from great to small
Sinking assuredly : if this world last
One moment longer when Man finds its Past
Exceed its Present — blame the Protoplast !
If we no longer see as you of old,
'T is we see deeper. Progress for the bold !

You saw the body, 't is the soul we see.
Try now! Bear witness while you walk with me,
I see as you: if we loose arms, stop pace,
'T is that you stand still, I conclude the race
Without your company. Come, walk once more
The "Walk": if I to-day as you of yore
See just like you the blind — then sight shall cry
— The whole long day quite gone through — victory!

VIII.

Thunders on thunders, doubling and redoubling
Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp white fire
Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage, troubling
Hardly the fir-boles, now discharged its ire
Full where some pine-tree's solitary spire
Crashed down, defiant to the last: till — lo,
The motive of the malice! — all a-glow,
Circled with flame there yawned a sudden rift
I' the rock-face, and I saw a form erect
Front and defy the outrage, while — as checked,
Chidden, beside him dauntless in the drift —
Cowered a heaped creature, wing and wing outspread
In deprecation o'er the crouching head
Still hungry for the feast foregone awhile.
O thou, of scorn's unconquerable smile,
Was it when this — Jove's feathered fury — slipped
Gore-glutted from the heart's core whence he ripped —
This eagle-hound — neither reproach nor prayer —
Baffled, in one more fierce attempt to tear
Fate's secret from thy safeguard, — was it then
That all these thunders rent earth, ruined air
To reach thee, pay thy patronage of men?
He thundered, — to withdraw, as beast to lair,
Before the triumph on thy pallid brow.

Gather the night again about thee now,
Hate on, love ever! Morn is breaking there —
The granite ridge pricks through the mist, turns gold
As wrong turns right. O laughters manifold
Of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair!

IX.

But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight
Above the baffled tempest: tree and tree
Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,
And every strangled branch resumes its right
To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging dregs, waves free
In dripping glory. Prone the runnels plunge,
While earth, distent with moisture like a sponge,
Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem to see,
Each grass-blade's glory-glitter. Had I known
The torrent now turned river? — masterful
Making its rush o'er tumbled ravage — stone
And stub which barred the froths and foams: no bull
Ever broke bounds in formidable sport
More overwhelmingly, till lo, the spasm
Sets him to dare that last mad leap: report
Who may — his fortunes in the deathly chasm
That swallows him in silence! Rather turn
Whither, upon the upland, pedestalled
Into the broad day-splendor, whom discern
These eyes but thee, supreme one, rightly called
Moon-maid in heaven above and, here below,
Earth's huntress-queen? I note the garb succinct
Saving from smirch that purity of snow
From breast to knee — snow's self with just the tinct
Of the apple-blossom's heart-blush. Ah, the bow
Slack-strung her fingers grasp, where, ivory-linked

Horn curving blends with horn, a moonlike pair
Which mimic the brow's crescent sparkling so —
As if a star's live restless fragment winked
Proud yet repugnant, captive in such hair!
What hope along the hillside, what far bliss
Lets the crisp hair-plaits fall so low they kiss
Those lucid shoulders? Must a morn so blithe,
Needs have its sorrow when the twang and hiss
Tell that from out thy sheaf one shaft makes writhe
Its victim, thou unerring Artemis?
Why did the chamois stand so fair a mark
Arrested by the novel shape he dreamed
Was bred of liquid marble in the dark
Depths of the mountain's womb which ever teemed
With novel births of wonder? Not one spark
Of pity in that steel-gray glance which gleamed
At the poor hoof's protesting as it stamped
Idly the granite? Let me glide unseen
From thy proud presence: well mayst thou be queen
Of all those strange and sudden deaths which damped
So oft Love's torch and Hymen's taper lit
For happy marriage till the maidens paled
And perished on the temple-step, assailed
By — what except to envy must man's wit
Impute that sure implacable release
Of life from warmth and joy? But death means peace.

X.

Noon is the conqueror, — not a spray, nor leaf,
Nor herb, nor blossom but has rendered up
Its morning dew: the valley seemed one cup
Of cloud-smoke, but the vapor's reign was brief,
Sun-smitten, see, it hangs — the filmy haze —
Gray-garmenting the herbless mountain-side,

To soothe the day's sharp glare : while far and wide
Above unclouded burns the sky, one blaze
With fierce immitigable blue, no bird
Ventures to spot by passage. E'en of peaks
Which still presume there, plain each pale point speaks
In wan transparency of waste incurred
By over-daring : far from me be such !
Deep in the hollow, rather, where combine
Tree, shrub and briar to roof with shade and cool
The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,
Edged round with mossy fringing soft and fine.
Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead
Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service-tree
And one beneficent rich barberry
Jewelled all over with fruit-pendents red.
What have I seen ! O Satyr, well I know
How sad thy case, and what a world of woe
Was hid by the brown visage furry-framed
Only for mirth : who otherwise could think —
Marking thy mouth gape still on laughter's brink,
Thine eyes a-swim with merriment unnamed
But haply guessed at by their furtive wink ?
And all the while a heart was panting sick
Behind that shaggy bulwark of thy breast —
Passion it was that made those breath-bursts thick
I took for mirth subsiding into rest.
So, it was Lyda — she of all the train
Of forest-thridding nymphs, — 't was only she
Turned from thy rustic homage in disdain,
Saw but that poor uncouth outside of thee,
And, from her circling sisters, mocked a pain
Echo had pitied — whom Pan loved in vain —
For she was wishful to partake thy glee,
Mimic thy mirth — who loved her not again,

Savage for Lyda's sake. She crouches there —
Thy cruel beauty, slumberously laid
Supine on heaped-up beast-skins, unaware
Thy steps have traced her to the briery glade,
Thy greedy hands disclose the cradling lair,
Thy hot eyes reach and revel on the maid!

XI.

Now, what should this be for? The sun's decline
Seems as he lingered lest he lose some act
Dread and decisive, some prodigious fact
Like thunder from the safe sky's sapphirine
About to alter earth's conditions, packed
With fate for nature's self that waits, aware
What mischief unsuspected in the air
Menaces momently a cataract.
Therefore it is that yonder space extends
Untrenched upon by any vagrant tree,
Shrub, weed well nigh; they keep their bounds, leave free
The platform for what actors? Foes or friends,
Here come they trooping silent: heaven suspends
Purpose the while they range themselves. I see!
Bent on a battle, two vast powers agree
This present and no after-contest ends
One or the other's grasp at rule in reach
Over the race of man — host fronting host,
As statue statue fronts — wrath-molten each,
Solidified by hate, — earth halved almost,
To close once more in chaos. Yet two shapes
Show prominent, each from the universe
Of minions round about him, that disperse
Like cloud-obstruction when a bolt escapes.
Who flames first? Macedonian is it thou?

Ay, and who fronts thee, King Darius, drapes
His form with purple, fillet-folds his brow.

XII.

What, then the long day dies at last? Abrupt
The sun that seemed, in stooping, sure to melt
Our mountain ridge, is mastered: black the belt
Of westward crags, his gold could not corrupt,
Barriers again the valley, lets the flow
Of lavish glory waste itself away
— Whither? For new climes, fresh eyes, breaks the day!
Night was not to be baffled. If the glow
Were all that's gone from us! Did clouds, afloat
So filmily but now, discard no rose,
Sombre throughout the fleeciness that grows
A sullen uniformity. I note
Rather displeasure, — in the overspread
Change from the swim of gold to one pale lead
Oppressive to malevolence, — than late
Those amorous yearnings when the aggregate
Of cloudlets pressed that each and all might sate
Its passion and partake in relics red
Of day's bequeathment: now, a frown instead
Estranges, and affrights who needs must fare
On and on till his journey ends: but where?
Caucasus? Lost now in the night. Away
And far enough lies that Arcadia.
The human heroes tread the world's dark way
No longer. Yet I dimly see almost —
Yes, for my last adventure! 'T is a ghost.
So drops away the beauty! There he stands
Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating hands.

XIII.

Enough! Stop further fooling, De Lairesse!
My fault, not yours! Some fitter way express
Heart's satisfaction that the Past indeed
Is past, gives way before Life's best and last,
The all-including Future! What were life
Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife
Through the ambiguous Present to the goal
Of some all-reconciling Future? Soul,
Nothing has been which shall not bettered be
Hereafter, — leave the root, by law's decree
Whence springs the ultimate and perfect tree!
Busy thee with unearthing root? Nay, climb —
Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower — reach, rest sublime
Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day!
O'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower away,
Intent on progress? No whit more than stop
Ascent therewith to dally, screen the top
Sufficiency of yield by interposed
Twistwork bold foot gets free from. Wherefore glozed
The poets — "Dream afresh old godlike shapes,
Recapture ancient fable that escapes,
Push back reality, repeople earth
With vanished falseness, recognize no worth
In fact new-born unless 't is rendered back
Pallid by fancy, as the western rack
Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some gleam
Of its gone glory!"

XIV.

Let things be — not seem,
I counsel rather, — do, and nowise dream!

Earth's young significance is all to learn :
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn
Where who seeks fire finds ashes. Ghost, forsooth !
What was the best Greece babbled of as truth ?
" A shade, a wretched nothing, — sad, thin, drear,
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,
If hand have haply sprinkled o'er the dead
Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red
One moment by the sip of sacrifice :
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length
The last faint flutter craving — not for strength,
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule
O'er men that made life life indeed." Sad school
Was Hades ! Gladly, — might the dead but slink
To life back, — to the dregs once more would drink
Each interloper, drain the humblest cup
Fate mixes for humanity.

XV.

Cheer up, —
Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,
Of Man's calamities the last and worst :
Take it so ! By proved potency that still
Makes perfect, be assured, come what come will,
What once lives never dies — what here attains
To a beginning, has no end, still gains
And never loses aught : when, where, and how —
Lies in Law's lap. What's death then ? Even now
With so much knowledge is it hard to bear
Brief interposing ignorance ? Is care
For a creation found at fault just there —
There where the heart breaks bond and outruns time,
To reach, not follow what shall be ?

XVI.

Here 's rhyme
Such as one makes now, — say, when Spring repeats
That miracle the Greek Bard sadly greets:
"Spring for the tree and herb — no Spring for us!"
Let Spring come: why, a man salutes her thus:

Dance, yellows and whites and reds, —
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads
Astir with the wind in the tulip-beds!

There 's sunshine; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by a churchyard wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows:
Dance you, reds and whites and yellows!

WITH CHARLES AVISON.

I.

How strange! — but, first of all, the little fact
Which led my fancy forth. This bitter morn
Showed me no object in the stretch forlorn
Of garden-ground beneath my window, backed
By yon worn wall wherefrom the creeper, tacked
To clothe its brickwork, hangs now, rent and racked
By five months' cruel winter, — showed no torn
And tattered ravage worse for eyes to see
Than just one ugly space of clearance, left
Bare even of the bones which used to be
Warm wrappage, safe embracement: this one cleft —

— O what a life and beauty filled it up
Startlingly, when methought the rude clay cup
Ran over with poured bright wine! 'T was a bird
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize, deterred
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake: gain
Such prize my blackcap must by might and main —
The cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told the tale
To thee, — no townsman but born orchard-thief, —
That here — surpassing moss-tuft, beard from sheaf
Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout,
All proper country-pillage — here, no doubt,
Was just the scrap to steal should line thy nest
Superbly? Off he flew, his bill possessed
The booty sure to set his wife's each wing
Greenly a-quiver. How they climb and cling,
Hang parrot-wise to bough, these blackcaps! Strange
Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch
Should stray so far to forage: at a pinch,
Was not the fine wool's self within his range
— Filchings on every fence? But no: the need
Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled
By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,
New-suited to what scheming finch would breed
In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

II.

Yet — by the first pink blossom on the larch! —
This was scarce stranger than that memory, —
In want of what should cheer the stay-at-home,
My soul, — must straight clap pinion, well nigh roam
A century back, nor once close plume, descry
The appropriate rag to plunder, till she pounced —
Pray, on what relic of a brain long still?

What old-world work proved forage for the bill
Of memory the far-flyer? "March" announced,
I verily believe, the dead and gone
Name of a music-maker: one of such
In England as did little or did much,
But, doing, had their day once. Avison!
Singly and solely for an air of thine,
Bold-stepping "March," foot stept to ere my hand
Could stretch an octave, I o'erlooked the band
Of majesties familiar, to decline
On thee — not too conspicuous on the list
Of worthies who by help of pipe or wire
Expressed in sound rough rage or soft desire —
Thou, whilom of Newcastle organist!

III.

So much could one — well, thinnish air effect.
Am I ungrateful? for, your March, styled "Grand,"
Did veritably seem to grow, expand,
And greaten up to title as, unchecked,
Dream-marchers marched, kept marching, slow and sure,
In time, to tune, unchangeably the same,
From nowhere into nowhere, — out they came,
Onward they passed, and in they went. No lure
Of novel modulation pricked the flat
Forthright persisting melody, — no hint
That discord, sound asleep beneath the flint,
— Struck — might spring spark-like, claim due tit-for-tat,
Quenched in a concord. No! Yet, such the might
Of quietude's immutability,
That somehow coldness gathered warmth, well nigh

Quickened — which could not be! — grew burning-
bright
With fife-shriek, cymbal-clash and trumpet-blare,
To drum-accentuation: pacing turned
Striding, and striding grew gigantic, spurned
At last the narrow space 'twixt earth and air,
So shook me back into my sober self.

IV.

And where woke I? The March had set me down
There whence I plucked the measure, as his brown
Frayed flannel-bit my blackcap. Great John Relfe,
Master of mine, learned, redoubtable,
It little needed thy consummate skill
To fitly figure such a bass! The key
Was — should not memory play me false — well, C.
Ay, with the Greater Third, in Triple Time,
Three crotchets to a bar: no change, I grant,
Except from Tonic down to Dominant.
And yet — and yet — if I could put in rhyme
The manner of that marching! — which had stopped
— I wonder, where? — but that my weak self dropped
From out the ranks, to rub eyes disentranced
And feel that, after all the way advanced,
Back must I foot it, I and my compeers,
Only to reach, across a hundred years,
The bandsman Avison whose little book
And large tune thus had led me the long way
(As late a rag my blackcap) from to-day
And to-day's music-manufacture, — Brahms,
Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt, — to where — trumpets,
shawms,
Show yourselves joyful! — Handel reigns — supreme?
By no means! Buononcini's work is theme

For fit laudation of the impartial few:
(We stand in England, mind you!) Fashion too
Favors Geminiani — of those choice
Concertos: nor there wants a certain voice
Raised in thy favor likewise, famed Pepusch
Dear to our great-grandfathers! In a bush
Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing beats
While Greenway trilled "Alexis." Such were feats
Of music in thy day — dispute who list —
Avison, of Newcastle organist!

v.

And here's your music all alive once more —
As once it was alive, at least: just so
The figured worthies of a waxwork-show
Attest — such people, years and years ago,
Looked thus when outside death had life below,
— Could say "We are now," not "We were of yore,"
— "Feel how our pulses leap!" and not "Explore —
Explain why quietude has settled o'er
Surface once all-awork!" Ay, such a "Suite"
Roused heart to rapture, such a "Fugue" would catch
Soul heavenwards up, when time was: why attach
Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no match
For fresh achievement? Feat once — ever feat!
How can completion grow still more complete?
Hear Avison! He tenders evidence
That music in his day as much absorbed
Heart and soul then as Wagner's music now.
Perfect from centre to circumference —
Orbed to the full can be but fully orbed:

And yet — and yet — whence comes it that "O Thou" —
Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus —
Will not again take wing and fly away
(Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us)
In some unmodulated minor? Nay,
Even by Handel's help!

VI.

I state it thus:
There is no truer truth obtainable
By Man than comes of music. "Soul" — (accept
A word which vaguely names what no adept
In word-use fits and fixes so that still
Thing shall not slip word's fetter and remain
Innominate as first, yet, free again,
Is no less recognized the absolute
Fact underlying that same other fact
Concerning which no cavil can dispute
Our nomenclature when we call it "Mind" —
Something not Matter) — "Soul," who seeks shall find
Distinct beneath that something. You exact
An illustrative image? This may suit.

VII.

We see a work: the worker works behind,
Invisible himself. Suppose his act
Be to o'erarch a gulf: he digs, transports,
Shapes and, through enginery — all sizes, sorts,
Lays stone by stone until a floor compact
Proves our bridged causeway. So works Mind — by stress
Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,

Builds up our solid knowledge : all the same,
Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not tame,
An element which works beyond our guess,
Soul, the unsounded sea — whose lift of surge,
Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,
In flower and foam, Feeling from out the deeps
Mind arrogates no mastery upon —
Distinct indisputably. Has there gone
To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from rough
Mind's flooring, — operosity enough ?
Still the successive labor of each inch,
Who lists may learn : from the last turn of winch
That let the polished slab-stone find its place,
To the first prod of pick-axe at the base
Of the unquarried mountain, — what was all
Mind's varied process except natural,
Nay, easy, even, to descry, describe,
After our fashion ? "So worked Mind : its tribe
Of senses ministrant above, below,
Far, near, or now or haply long ago
Brought to pass knowledge." But Soul's sea, — drawn whence,
Fed how, forced whither, — by what evidence
Of ebb and flow, that 's felt beneath the tread,
Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work overhead, —
Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of Soul ?
Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless roll
This side and that, except to emulate
Stability above ? To match and mate
Feeling with knowledge, — make as manifest
Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as rest,
Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that rise and sink
Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and wink,
A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread

Whitening the wave, — to strike all this life dead,
Run mercury into a mould like lead,
And henceforth have the plain result to show —
How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know —
This were the prize and is the puzzle! — which
Music essays to solve : and here 's the hitch
That balks her of full triumph else to boast.

VIII.

All Arts endeavor this, and she the most
Attains thereto, yet fails of touching : why ?
Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry ?
What 's known once is known ever : Arts arrange,
Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep
Construct their bravest, — still such pains produce
Change, not creation : simply what lay loose
At first lies firmly after, what design
Was faintly traced in hesitating line
Once on a time, grows firmly resolute
Henceforth and evermore. Now, could we shoot
Liquidity into a mould, — some way
Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep
Unalterably still the forms that leap
To life for once by help of Art ! — which yearns
To save its capture : Poetry discerns,
Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall,
Bursting, subsidence, intermixture — all
A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain
Would stay the apparition, — nor in vain :
The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift
Color-and-line-throw — proud the prize they lift !
Thus felt Man and thus looked Man, — passions caught
I' the midway swim of sea, — not much, if aught,

Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears,
Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet the years,
And still the Poet's page holds Helena
At gaze from topmost Troy — "But where are they,
My brothers, in the armament I name
Hero by hero? Can it be that shame
For their lost sister holds them from the war?"
— Knowing not they already slept afar
Each of them in his own dear native land.
Still on the Painter's fresco, from the hand
Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto
She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo
Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet,
Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-net, —
The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it lies,
Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!
Save it from chance and change we most abhor!
Give momentary feeling permanence,
So that thy capture hold, a century hence,
Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day,
The Painter's Eve, the Poet's Helena,
Still rapturously bend, afar still throw
The wistful gaze! Thanks, Homer, Angelo!
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,
Give feeling immortality by sound,
Then were she queenliest of Arts! Alas —
As well expect the rainbow not to pass!
"Praise 'Radaminta' — love attains therein
To perfect utterance! Pity — what shall win
Thy secret like 'Rinaldo'?" — so men said:
Once all was perfume — now, the flower is dead —

They spied tints, sparks have left the spar! Love, hate,
Joy, fear, survive, — alike importunate
As ever to go walk the world again,
Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain
Till Music loose them, fit each filmily
With form enough to know and name it by
For any recognizer sure of ken
And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen
Of earth than needs be. Nor to such appeal
Is Music long obdurate: off they steal —
How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms! back come they
Full-blooded with new crimson of broad day —
Passion made palpable once more. Ye look
Your last on Handel? Gaze your first on Gluck!
Why wistful search, O waning ones, the chart
Of stars for you while Haydn, while Mozart
Occupies heaven? These also, fanned to fire,
Flamboyant wholly, — so perfections tire, —
Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others note
The ever-new invasion!

IX.

I devote
Rather my modicum of parts to use
What power may yet avail to re-infuse
(In fancy, please you!) sleep that looks like death
With momentary liveliness, lend breath
To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe,
An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf
Of thy laboratory, dares unstop
Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and drop
Of dusts and dews a many thou didst shrine

Each in its right receptacle, assign
To each its proper office, letter large
Label and label, then with solemn charge,
Reviewing learnedly the list complete
Of chemical reactives, from thy feet
Push down the same to me, attent below,
Power in abundance: armed wherewith I go
To play the enlivener. Bring good antique stuff!
Was it alight once? Still lives spark enough
For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash
Red right-through. What, "stone-dead" were fools so rash
As style my Avison, because he lacked
Modern appliance, spread out phrase unracked
By modulations fit to make each hair
Stiffen upon his wig? See there — and there!
I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast
Discords and resolutions, turn aghast
Melody's easy-going, jostle law
With license, modulate (no Bach in awe),
Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank),
And lo, up-start the flamelets, — what was blank
Turns scarlet, purple, crimson! Straightway scanned
By eyes that like new lustre — Love once more
Yearns through the Largo, Hatred as before
Rages in the Rubato: e'en thy March,
My Avison, which, sooth to say — (ne'er arch
Eyebrows in anger!) — timed, in Georgian years
The step precise of British Grenadiers
To such a nicety, — if score I crowd,
If rhythm I break, if beats I vary, — tap
At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-clap,
Ever the pace augmented till — what 's here?
Titanic striding toward Olympus!

x.

Fear
No such irreverent innovation! Still
Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will —
Nay, were thy melody in monotone,
The due three-parts dispensed with!

xi.

This alone
Comes of my tiresome talking: Music's throne
Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,
And whom in turn — by who knows what new feats
Of strength, — shall somebody as sure push down,
Consign him dispossessed of sceptre, crown,
And orb imperial — whereto? — Never dream
That what once lived shall ever die! They seem
Dead — do they? lapsed things lost in limbo? Bring
Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each king
Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head to foot
No inch that is not Purcell! Wherefore? (Suit
Measure to subject, first — no marching on
Yet in thy bold C Major, Avison,
As suited step a minute since: no: wait —
Into the minor key first modulate —
Gently with A, now — in the Lesser Third!)

xii.

Of all the lamentable debts incurred
By Man through buying knowledge, this were worst:
That he should find his last gain prove his first
Was futile — merely nescience absolute,
Not knowledge in the bud which holds a fruit
Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-tide,

Pursed in the petals Summer opens wide,
And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect ripe, —
Not this, — but ignorance, a blur to wipe
From human records, late it graced so much.
"Truth — this attainment? Ah, but such and such
Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable
When we attained them! E'en as they, so will
This their successor have the due morn, noon,
Evening and night — just as an old-world tune
Wears out and drops away, until who hears
Smilingly questions — 'This it was brought tears
Once to all eyes, — this roused heart's rapture once?'
So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,
Styles itself truth perennial: 'ware its wile!
Knowledge turns nescience, — foremost on the file,
Simply proves first of our delusions."

XIII.

Now —
Blare it forth, bold C Major! Lift thy brow,
Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled
With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed —
Man knowing — he who nothing knew! As Hope,
Fear, Joy, and Grief, — though ampler stretch and scope
They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh phrase, —
Were equally existent in far days
Of Music's dim beginning — even so,
Truth was at full within thee long ago,
Alive as now it takes what latest shape
May startle thee by strangeness. Truths escape
Time's insufficient garniture: they fade,
They fall — those sheathings now grown sere, whose aid
Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved fine
And free through March frost: May dews crystalline

Nourish truth merely, — does June boast the fruit
As — not new vesture merely but, to boot,
Novel creation? Soon shall fade and fall
Myth after myth — the husk-like lies I call
New truth's corolla-safeguard: Autumn comes,
So much the better!

XIV.

Therefore — bang the drums,
Blow the trumpets, Avison! March-motive? that's
Truth which endures resetting. Sharps and flats,
Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy score
When ophicleide and bombardon's uproar
Mate the approaching trample, even now
Big in the distance — or my ears deceive —
Of federated England, fitly weave
March-music for the Future!

XV.

Or suppose
Back, and not forward, transformation goes?
Once more some sable-stoled procession — say,
From Little-ease to Tyburn — wends its way,
Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree
Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be
Of half-a-dozen recusants — this day
Three hundred years ago! How duly drones
Elizabethan plain-song — dim antique
Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly wreak
A classic vengeance on thy March! It moans —
Larges and Longs and Breves displacing quite
Crotchet-and-quaver pertness — brushing bars
Aside and filling vacant sky with stars
Hidden till now that day returns to night.

XVI.

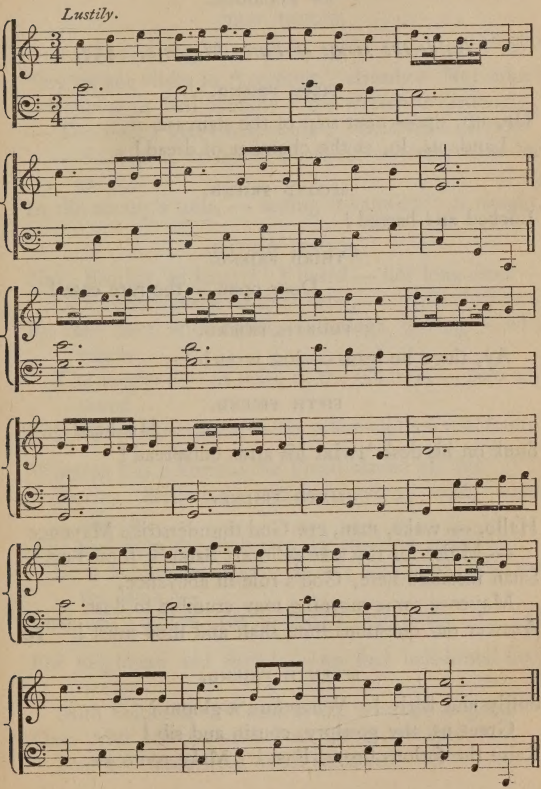
Nor night nor day : one purpose move us both,
Be thy mood mine ! As thou wast minded, Man's
The cause our music champions : I were loth
To think we cheered our troop to Preston Pans
Ignobly : back to times of England's best !
Parliament stands for privilege — life and limb
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym,
The famous Five. There 's rumor of arrest.
Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark ! They protest :
Shall we not all join chorus ? Hark the hymn,
— Rough, rude, robustious — homely heart a-throb,
Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob !
How good is noise ! what 's silence but despair
Of making sound match gladness never there ?
Give me some great glad "subject," glorious Bach,
Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack !
Join in, give voice robustious rude and rough, —
Avison helps — so heart lend noise enough !

Fife, trump, drum, sound ! and singers then,
Marching, say "Pym, the man of men !"
Up, heads, your proudest — out, throats, your loudest —
"Somerset's Pym !"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,
Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen !"
Wail, the foes he quelled, — hail, the friends he held,
"Tavistock's Pym !"

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen
Teach babes unborn the where and when

— Tyrants, he braved them, — patriots, he saved them —
" Westminster's Pym !"



FUST AND HIS FRIENDS.

AN EPILOGUE.

Inside the House of Fust, Mayence, 1457.

FIRST FRIEND.

Up, up, up — next step of the staircase
Lands us, lo, at the chamber of dread!

SECOND FRIEND.

Locked and barred?

THIRD FRIEND.

Door open — the rare case!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Ay, there he leans — lost wretch!

FIFTH FRIEND.

His head
Sunk on his desk 'twixt his arms outspread!

SIXTH FRIEND.

Hallo, — wake, man, ere God thunderstrike Mayence
— Mulct for thy sake who art Satan's, John Fust!
Satan installed here, God's rule in abeyance,
Mayence some morning may crumble to dust.
Answer our questions thou shalt and thou must!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Softly and fairly! Wherefore a-gloom?
Greet us, thy gossipry, cousin and sib!
Raise the forlorn brow, Fust! Make room —

Let daylight through arms which, enfolding thee, crib
From those clenched lids the comfort of sunshine !

FIRST FRIEND.

So glib
Thy tongue slides to "comfort" already? Not mine!
Behoves us deal roundly : the wretch is distraught
— Too well I guess wherefore ! Behoves a Divine
— Such as I, by grace, boast me — to threaten one caught
In the enemy's toils, — setting "comfort" at naught.

SECOND FRIEND.

Nay, Brother, so hasty ? I heard — nor long since —
Of a certain Black Artsman who, — helplessly bound
By rash pact with Satan, — through paying — why mince
The matter ? — fit price to the Church, — safe and sound
Full a year after death in his grave-clothes was found.

Whereas 't is notorious the Fiend claims his due
During lifetime, — comes clawing, with talons aflame,
The soul from the flesh-rags left smoking and blue :
So it happed with John Faust; lest John Fust fare the same, —
Look up, I adjure thee by God's holy name !

For neighbors and friends — no foul hell-brood flock we!
Saith Solomon "Words of the wise are as goads :"
Ours prick but to startle from torpor, set free
Soul and sense from death's drowse.

FIRST FRIEND.

And soul, wakened, unloads
Much sin by confession: no mere palinodes!

— "I was youthful and wanton, am old yet no sage:
When angry I cursed, struck and slew: did I want?
Right and left did I rob: though no war I dared wage
With the Church (God forbid!) — harm her least ministrant —
Still I outraged all else. Now that strength is grown scant,

"I am probity's self" — no such bleatings as these!
But avowal of guilt so enormous, it balks
Tongue's telling. Yet penitence prompt may appease
God's wrath at thy bond with the Devil who stalks
— Strides hither to strangle thee!

FUST.

Childhood so talks.

Not rare wit nor ripe age — ye boast them, my neighbors! —
Should lay such a charge on your townsman, this Fust
Who, known for a life spent in pleasures and labors
If freakish yet venial, could scarce be induced
To traffic with fiends.

FIRST FRIEND.

So, my words have unloosed
A ply from those pale lips corrugate but now?

FUST.

Lost count me, yet not as ye lean to surmise.

FIRST FRIEND.

To surmise ? to establish ! Unbury that brow !
Look up, that thy judge may read clear in thine eyes !

SECOND FRIEND.

By your leave, Brother Barnabite ! Mine to advise !

— Who arraign thee, John Fust ! What was bruited erewhile
Now bellows through Mayence. All cry — thou hast trucked
Salvation away for lust's solace ! Thy smile
Takes its hue from hell's smoulder !

FUST.

Too certain ! I sucked
— Got drunk at the nipple of sense.

SECOND FRIEND.

Thou hast ducked —

Art drowned there, say rather ! Faugh — fleshly disport !
How else but by help of Sir Belial didst win
That Venus-like lady, no drudge of thy sort
Could lure to become his accomplice in sin ?
Folk nicknamed her Helen of Troy !

FIRST FRIEND.

Best begin

At the very beginning. Thy father, — all knew,
A mere goldsmith . . .

FUST.

Who knew him, perchance may know this —
He dying left much gold and jewels no few :
Whom these help to court with but seldom shall miss
The love of a leman : true witchcraft, I wis !

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost flout me ? 'T is said, in debauchery's guild
Admitted prime guttler and guzzler — O swine ! —
To honor thy headship, those tosspots so swilled
That out of their table there sprouted a vine
Whence each claimed a cluster, awaiting thy sign

To out knife, off mouthful : when — who could suppose
Such malice in magic ? — each sot woke and found
Cold steel but an inch from the neighbor's red nose
He took for a grape-bunch !

FUST.

Does that so astound
Sagacity such as ye boast, — who surround

Your mate with eyes staring, hairs standing erect
At his magical feats ? Are good burghers unversed
In the humors of toping ? Full oft, I suspect,
Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin their first,
And reckon a groat every guilder disbursed.

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast brimmed
Their glass with rare tipple's enticement, should gloat
— Befooled and beflustered — through optics drink-dimmed —
On this draught and that, till each found in his throat
Our Rhenish smack rightly as Raphal ? For, note —

They fancied — their fuddling deceived them so grossly —
That liquor sprang out of the table itself
Through gimlet-holes drilled there, — nor noticed now closely
The skinker kept plying my guests, from the shelf
O'er their heads, with the potable madness. No elf

Had need to persuade them a vine rose umbrageous,
Fruit-bearing, thirst-quenching ! Enough ! I confess
To many such fool-pranks, but none so outrageous
That Satan was called in to help me : excess
I own to, I grieve at — no more and no less.

SECOND FRIEND.

Strange honors were heaped on thee — medal for breast,
Chain for neck, sword for thigh : not a lord of the land
But acknowledged thee peer ! What ambition possessed
A goldsmith by trade, with craft's grime on his hand,
To seek such associates ?

FUST.

Spare taunts ! Understand —

I submit me ! Of vanities under the sun,
Pride seized me at last as concupiscence first,
Crapulosity ever : true Fiends, every one,
Haled this way and that my poor soul : thus amerced —
Forgive and forget me !

FIRST FRIEND.

Had flesh sinned the worst,

Yet help were in counsel: the Church could absolve:
But say not men truly thou barredst escape
By signing and sealing . . .

SECOND FRIEND.

On me must devolve
The task of extracting . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

Shall Barnabites ape
Us Dominican experts?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, Masters, — agape
When Hell yawns for a soul, 't is myself claim the task
Of extracting, by just one plain question, God's truth!
Where 's Peter Genesheim thy partner? I ask
Why, cloistered up still in thy room, the pale youth
Slaves tongue-tied — thy trade brooks no tattling forsooth!

No less he, thy *famulus*, suffers entrapping, 121
Succumbs to good fellowship: barrel a-broach
Runs freely nor needs any subsequent tapping:
Quoth Peter "That room, none but I dare approach,
Holds secrets will help me to ride in my coach."

He prattles, we profit: in brief, he assures
Thou hast taught him to speak so that all men may hear
— Each alike, wide world over, Jews, Pagans, Turks, Moors,

The same as we Christians — speech heard far and
near
At one and the same magic moment !

FUST.

That 's clear !
Said he — how ?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Is it like he was licensed to learn ?
Who doubts but thou dost this by aid of the Fiend ?
Is it so ? So it is, for thou smilest ! Go, burn
To ashes, since such proves thy portion, unscreened
By bell, book and candle ! Yet lately I weened

Balm yet was in Gilead, — some healing in store
For the friend of my bosom. Men said thou wast sunk
In a sudden despondency : not, as before,
Fust gallant and gay with his pottle and punk,
But sober, sad, sick as one yesterday drunk !

FUST.

Spare Fust, then, thus contrite ! — who, youthful and
healthy,
Equipped for life's struggle with culture of mind,
Sound flesh and sane soul in coherence, born wealthy,
Nay, wise — how he wasted endowment designed
For the glory of God and the good of mankind !

That much were misused such occasions of grace
Ye well may upbraid him, who bows to the rod.
But this should bid anger to pity give place —
He has turned from the wrong, in the right path to
plod,
Makes amends to mankind and craves pardon of God.

Yea, friends, even now from my lips the "*Heureka* —
Soul saved!" was nigh bursting — unduly elate!
Have I brought Man advantage, or hatched — so to
speak — a
Strange serpent, no cygnet? 'T is this I debate
Within me. Forbear, and leave Fust to his fate!

FIRST FRIEND.

So abject, late lofty? Methinks I spy respite.
Make clean breast, discover what mysteries hide
In thy room there!

SECOND FRIEND.

Ay, out with them! Do Satan despite!
Remember what caused his undoing was pride!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dumb devil! Remains one resource to be tried!

SECOND FRIEND.

Exorcise!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, first — is there any remembers
In substance that potent "*Ne pulvis*" — a psalm
Whereof some live spark haply lurks mid the embers
Which choke in my brain. Talk of "Gilead and
balm"?
I mind me, sung half through, this gave such a qualm

To Asmodeus inside of a Hussite, that, queasy,
He broke forth in brimstone with curses. I'm strong
In — at least the commencement: the rest should go
easy,
Friends helping. "*Ne pulvis et ignis*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

All wrong!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I 've conned till I captured the whole.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Get along!

" *Ne pulvis et cinis superbe te geras,* 171
Nam fulmina" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Fiddlestick! Peace, dolts and dorrs!
Thus runs it " *Ne Numinis fulmina feras*" —
Then " *Hominis perfidi justa sunt sors*
Fulmen et grando et horrida mors."

SEVENTH FRIEND.

You blunder. " *Irati ne*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Mind your own business!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I do not so badly, who gained the monk's leave
To study an hour his choice parchment. A dizziness
May well have surprised me. No Christian dares thieve,
Or I scarce had returned him his treasure. These cleave: 180

" *Nos pulvis et cinis, trementes, gementes,*
Venimus" — some such word — " *ad te, Domine.*
Da lumen, juvamen, ut sancta sequentes
Cor . . . corda . . ." Plague take it!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

— "*erecta sint spe:*"
Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me!

SIXTH FRIEND.

A Canon's self wrote it me fair: I was tempted
To part with the sheepskin.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Didst grasp and let go
Such a godsend, thou Judas? My purse had been emptied
Ere part with the prize!

FUST.

Do I dream? Say ye so?
Clouds break, then! Move, world! I have gained my "*Pou sto*"!
I am saved: Archimedes, salute me!

OMNES.

Assistance!
Help, Angels! He summons . . . Aroint thee! — by name,
His familiar!

FUST.

Approach!

OMNES.

Devil, keep thy due distance!

FUST.

Be tranquillized, townsmen! The knowledge ye claim
Behold, I prepare to impart. Praise or blame, —

Your blessing or banning, whatever betide me,
At last I accept. The slow travail of years,
The long-teeming brain's birth — applaud me, deride me, —
At last claims revealment. Wait!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Wait till appears
Uncaged Archimedes cooped-up there?

SECOND FRIEND.

Who fears?
Here 's have at thee!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Correctly now! "*Pulvis et cinis*" . . .

FUST.

The verse ye so value, it happens I hold
In my memory safe from *initium* to *finis*.
Word for word, I produce you the whole, plain enrolled,
Black letters, white paper — no scribe's red and gold!

OMNES.

Aroint thee!

FUST.

I go and return.
[*He enters the inner room.*

FIRST FRIEND.

Ay, 't is "*ibis*"
No doubt: but as boldly "*redibis*" — who 'll say?
I rather conjecture "*in Orco peribis!*"

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Come, neighbors!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I 'm with you! Show courage and stay
Hell's outbreak? Sirs, cowardice here wins the day!

FIFTH FRIEND.

What luck had that student of Bamberg who ventured
To peep in the cell where a wizard of note
Was busy in getting some black deed debentured
By Satan? In dog's guise there sprang at his throat
A flame-breathing fury. Fust favors, I note,

An ugly huge lurcher!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

If I placed reliance
As thou, on the beads thou art telling so fast,
I 'd risk just a peep through the keyhole.

SIXTH FRIEND.

Appliance
Of ear might be safer. Five minutes are past.

OMNES.

Saints, save us! The door is thrown open at last!

FUST (*re-enters, the door closing behind him*).

As I promised, behold I perform! Apprehend you
The object I offer is poison or pest?
Receive without harm from the hand I extend you
A gift that shall set every scruple at rest!
Shrink back from mere paper-strips? Try them and
test!

Still hesitate? Myk, was it thou who lamentedst
Thy five wits clean failed thee to render aright
A poem read once and no more? — who repentedst
Vile pelf had induced thee to banish from sight
The characters none but our clerics indite?

Take and keep!

FIRST FRIEND.

Blessed Mary and all Saints about her!

SECOND FRIEND.

What imps deal so deftly, — five minutes suffice
To play thus the penman?

THIRD FRIEND.

By Thomas the Doubter,
Five minutes, no more!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Out on arts that entice
Such scribes to do homage!

FIFTH FRIEND.

Stay! Once — and now twice —

Yea, a third time, my sharp eye completes the inspection
Of line after line, the whole series, and finds
Each letter join each — not a fault for detection!
Such upstrokes, such downstrokes, such strokes of all kinds
In the criss-cross, all perfect!

SIXTH FRIEND.

There 's nobody minds

His quill-craft with more of a conscience, o'erscratches
A sheepskin more nimbly and surely with ink,

Than Paul the Sub-Prior: here's paper that matches
His parchment with letter on letter, no link
Overleapt — underlost!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

No erasure, I think —
No blot, I am certain!

FUST.

Accept the new treasure!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I remembered full half!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

But who other than I
(Bear witness, bystanders!) when he broke the measure
Repaired fault with "*fulmen*"?

FUST.

Put bickerings by!
Here's for thee — thee — and thee, too: at need a supply [*distributing Proofs.*
For Mayence, though seventy times seven should muster! 251
How now? All so feeble of faith that no face
Which fronts me but whitens — or yellows, were juster?
Speak out lest I summon my Spirits!

OMNES.

Grace — grace!
Call none of thy — helpmates! We'll answer apace!

My paper — and mine — and mine also — they vary
In nowise — agree in each tittle and jot!
Fust, how — why was this?

FUST.

Shall such "*Cur*" miss a "*quare*"?
Within, there! Throw doors wide! Behold who complot
To abolish the scribe's work — blur, blunder and blot!
[*The doors open, and the Press is discovered in operation.*
Brave full-bodied birth of this brain that conceived thee
In splendor and music, — sustained the slow drag
Of the days stretched to years dim with doubt, — yet believed thee,
Had faith in thy first leap of life! Pulse might flag —
— Mine fluttered how faintly! — Arch-moment might lag

Its longest — I bided, made light of endurance,
Held hard by the hope of an advent which — dreamed,
Is done now: night yields to the dawn's reassurance:
I have thee — I hold thee — my fancy that seemed,
My fact that proves palpable! Ay, Sirs, I schemed

Completion that's fact: see this Engine — be witness
Yourselves of its working! Nay, handle my Types!
Each block bears a Letter: in order and fitness
I range them. Turn, Peter, the winch! See, it gripes
What's under! Let loose — draw! In regular stripes

Lies plain, at one pressure, your poem — touched, tinted,
Turned out to perfection! The sheet, late a blank,

Filled — ready for reading, — not written but PRINTED !
Omniscient omnipotent God, Thee I thank,
Thee ever, Thee only ! — Thy creature that shrank

From no task Thou, Creator, imposedst ! Creation
Revealed me no object, from insect to Man,
But bore Thy hand's impress : earth glowed with salvation :
"Hast sinned ? Be thou saved, Fust ! Continue my plan,
Who spake and earth was : with my word things began.

"As sound so went forth, to the sight be extended
Word's mission henceforward ! The task I assign,
Embrace — thy allegiance to evil is ended !
Have cheer, soul impregnate with purpose ! Combine
Soul and body, give birth to my concept — called thine !

"Far and wide, North and South, East and West, have dominion
O'er thought, winged wonder, O Word ! Traverse world
In sun-flash and sphere-song ! Each beat of thy pinion
Bursts night, beckons day : once Truth's banner unfurled,
Where's Falsehood ? Sun-smitten, to nothingness hurled ! "

More humbly — so, friends, did my fault find redemption.
I sinned, soul-entoiled by the tether of sense :
My captor reigned master : I plead no exemption
From Satan's award to his servant : defence
From the fiery and final assault would be — whence ?

By making — as man might — to truth restitution!
Truth is God: trample lies and lies' father, God's foe!
Fix fact fast: truths change by an hour's revolution:
What deed's very doer, unaided, can show
How 't was done a year — month — week — day — minute ago?

At best, he relates it — another reports it —
A third — nay, a thousandth records it: and still
Narration, tradition, no step but distorts it,
As down from truth's height it goes sliding until
At the low level lie-mark it stops — whence no skill

Of the scribe, intervening too tardily, rescues
— Once fallen — lost fact from lie's fate there. What scribe
— Eyes horny with poring, hands crippled with desk-use,
Brains fretted by fancies — the volatile tribe
That tease weary watchers — can boast that no bribe

Shuts eye and frees hand and remits brain from toiling?
Truth gained — can we stay, at whatever the stage,
Truth a-slide, — save her snow from its ultimate soiling
In mire, — by some process, stamp promptly on page
Fact spoiled by pen's plodding, make truth heritage

Not merely of clerics, but poured out, full measure,
On clowns — every mortal endowed with a mind?
Read, gentle and simple! Let labor win leisure
At last to bid truth do all duty assigned,
Not pause at the noble but pass to the hind!

How bring to effect such swift sure simultaneous
Unlimited multiplication? How spread
By an arm-sweep a hand-throw — no helping extraneous —
Truth broadcast o'er Europe? "The goldsmith," I said,
"Graves limning on gold: why not letters on lead?"

So, Tuscan artificer, grudge not thy pardon
To me who played false, made a furtive descent,
Found the sly secret workshop, — thy genius kept guard on
Too slackly for once, — and surprised thee low-bent
O'er thy labor — some chalice thy tool would indent

With a certain free scroll-work framed round by a border
Of foliage and fruitage: no scratching so fine,
No shading so shy but, in ordered disorder,
Each flourish came clear, — unbewildered by shine,
On the gold, irretrievably right, lay each line.

How judge if thy hand worked thy will? By reviewing,
Revising again and again, piece by piece,
Tool's performance, — this way, as I watched. 'T was through glueing
A paper-like film-stuff — thin, smooth, void of crease,
On each cut of the graver: press hard! at release,

No mark on the plate, but the paper showed double:
His work might proceed: as he judged — space or speck

Up he filled, forth he flung — was relieved thus from trouble
Lest wrong — once — were right never more: what could check
Advancement, completion? Thus lay at my beck —

At my call — triumph likewise! "For," cried I, "what hinders
That graving turns Printing? Stamp one word — not one
But fifty such, phœnix-like, spring from death's cinders, —
Since death is word's doom, clerics hide from the sun
As some churl closets up this rare chalice." Go, run

Thy race now, Fust's child! High, O Printing, and holy
Thy mission! These types, see, I chop and I change
Till the words, every letter, a pageful, not slowly
Yet surely lies fixed: last of all, I arrange
A paper beneath, stamp it, loosen it!

FIRST FRIEND.

Strange!

SECOND FRIEND.

How simple exceedingly!

FUST.

Bustle, my Schœffer!
Set type, — quick, Genesheim! Turn screw now!

THIRD FRIEND.

Just that!

FOURTH FRIEND.

And no such vast miracle !

FUST.

" Plough with my heifer,
Ye find out my riddle," quoth Samson, and pat
He speaks to the purpose. Grapes squeezed in the vat

Yield to sight and to taste what is simple — a liquid
Mere urchins may sip : but give time, let ferment —
You 've wine, manhood's master ! Well, "*rectius si quid*
Novistis im-per-ti-te !" Wait the event,
Then weigh the result ! But whate'er Thy intent,

O Thou, the one force in the whole variation
Of visible nature, — at work — do I doubt ? —
From Thy first to our last, in perpetual creation —
A film hides us from Thee — 'twixt inside and out,
A film, on this earth where Thou bringest about

New marvels, new forms of the glorious, the gracious,
We bow to, we bless for : no star bursts heaven's dome
But Thy finger impels it, no weed peeps audacious
Earth's clay-floor from out, but Thy finger makes room
For one world's-want the more in Thy Cosmos : presume

Shall Man, Microcosmos, to claim the conception
Of grandeur, of beauty, in thought, word or deed ?
I toiled, but Thy light on my dubiousest step shone :
If I reach the glad goal, is it I who succeed
Who stumbled at starting tripped up by a reed,

Or Thou? Knowledge only and absolute, glory
As utter be Thine who concedest a spark
Of Thy spheric perfection to earth's transitory
Existences! Nothing that lives, but Thy mark
Gives law to — life's light: what is doomed to the dark?

Where 's ignorance? Answer, creation! What height,
What depth has escaped Thy commandment — to Know?
What birth in the ore-bed but answers aright
Thy sting at its heart which impels — bids "E'en so,
Not otherwise move or be motionless, — grow,

"Decline, disappear!" Is the plant in default
How to bud, when to branch forth? The bird and the beast
— Do they doubt if their safety be found in assault
Or escape? Worm or fly, of what atoms the least
But follows light's guidance, — will famish, not feast?

In such various degree, fly and worm, ore and plant,
All know, none is witless: around each, a wall
Encloses the portion, or ample or scant,
Of Knowledge: beyond which one hair's breadth, for all
Lies blank — not so much as a blackness — a pall

Some sense unimagined must penetrate: plain
Is only old license to stand, walk or sit,
Move so far and so wide in the narrow domain
Allotted each nature for life's use: past it
How immensity spreads does he guess? Not a whit.

Does he care? Just as little. Without? No, within
Concerns him? he Knows. Man Ignores — thanks to Thee
Who madest him know, but — in knowing — begin
To know still new vastness of knowledge must be
Outside him — to enter, to traverse, in fee

Have and hold! "Oh, Man's ignorance!" hear the fool whine!
How were it, for better or worse, didst thou grunt
Contented with sapience — the lot of the swine
Who knows he was born for just truffles to hunt? —
Monks' Paradise — "*Semper sint res uti sunt!*" 420

No, Man's the prerogative — knowledge once gained —
To ignore, — find new knowledge to press for, to swerve
In pursuit of, no, not for a moment: attained —
Why, onward through ignorance! Dare and deserve!
As still to its asymptote speedeth the curve,

So approximates Man — Thee, who, reachable not,
Hast formed him to yearningly follow Thy whole
Sole and single omniscience!
Such, friends, is my lot:
I am back with the world: one more step to the goal
Thanks for reaching I render — Fust's help to Man's soul! 430

Mere mechanical help? So the hand gives a toss
To the falcon, — aloft once, spread pinions and fly,
Beat air far and wide, up and down and across!
My Press strains a-tremble: whose masterful eye
Will be first, in new regions, new truth to descry?

Give chase, soul! Be sure each new capture consigned
To my Types will go forth to the world, like God's bread
— Miraculous food not for body but mind,
Truth's manna! How say you? Put case that, instead
Of old leasing and lies, we superiorly fed

These Heretics, Hussites . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

First answer my query!
If saved, art thou happy?

FUST.

I was and I am.

FIRST FRIEND.

Thy visage confirms it: how comes, then, that — weary
And woe-begone late — was it show, was it sham? —
We found thee sunk thiswise?

SECOND FRIEND.

— In need of the dram

From the flask which a provident neighbor might carry!

FUST.

Ah, friends, the fresh triumph soon flickers, fast fades!
I hailed Word's dispersion: could heartleaps but tarry!
Through me does Print furnish Truth wings? The same aids
Cause Falsehood to range just as widely. What raids

On a region undreamed of does Printing enable
Truth's foe to effect! Printed leasing and lies
May speed to the world's farthest corner — gross fable
No less than pure fact — to impede, neutralize,
Abolish God's gift and Man's gain!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost surmise

What struck me at first blush? Our Beghards, Waldenses,
Jeronimites, Hussites — does one show his head,
Spout heresy now? Not a priest in his senses
Deigns answer mere speech, but piles faggots instead,
Refines as by fire, and, him silenced, all 's said.

Whereas if in future I pen an opuscule
Defying retort, as of old when rash tongues
Were easy to tame, — straight some knave of the Huss-School
Prints answer forsooth! Stop invisible lungs?
The barrel of blasphemy broached once, who bungs?

SECOND FRIEND.

Does my sermon, next Easter, meet fitting acceptance?
Each captious disputative boy has his quirk
"*An cuique credendum sit?*" Well the Church kept "*ans*"
In order till Fust set his engine at work!
What trash will come flying from Jew, Moor and Turk

When, goosequill, thy reign o'er the world is abolished!
Goose — ominous name! With a goose woe began:

Quoth Huss — which means "goose" in his idiom unpolished —

"Ye burn now a Goose: there succeeds me a Swan
Ye shall find quench your fire!"

FUST.

I foresee such a man.

ASOLANDO:

FANCIES AND FACTS.

1889.

TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON.

To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses — some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year, — adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days?

I unite, you will see, the disconnected poems by a title-name popularly ascribed to the inventiveness of the ancient secretary of Queen Cornaro whose palace-tower still overlooks us: Asolare — "to disport in the open air, amuse oneself at random." The objection that such a word nowhere occurs in the works of the Cardinal is hardly important — Bembo was too thorough a purist to conserve in print a term which in talk he might possibly toy with: but the word is more likely derived from a Spanish source. I use it for love of the place, and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither — where and elsewhere, at La Mura as Cà Alvisi, may all happiness attend you!

Gratefully and affectionately yours,

R. B.

Asolo: *October* 15, 1889.

PROLOGUE.

"THE Poet's age is sad: for why?
In youth, the natural world could show
No common object but his eye
At once involved with alien glow —
His own soul's iris-bow.

"And now a flower is just a flower:
Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man —
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower
Of dyes which, when life's day began,
Round each in glory ran."

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
Which were your choice? A lens to drape
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
Each object — or reveal its shape
Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing? — so clear
That, when you had the chance to gaze,
You found its inmost self appear
Through outer seeming — truth ablaze,
Not falsehood's fancy-haze?

How many a year, my Asolo,
Since — one step just from sea to land —
I found you, loved yet feared you so —
For natural objects seemed to stand
Palpably fire-clothed! No —

No mastery of mine o'er these!
Terror with beauty, like the Bush
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,
Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!
Silence 't is awe decrees.

And now? The lambent flame is — where?
Lost from the naked world: earth, sky,
Hill, vale, tree, flower, — Italia's rare
O'er-running beauty crowds the eye —
But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower — they stand distinct,
Nature to know and name. What then?
A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked
Fancy from fact: see, all 's in ken:
Has once my eyelid winked?

No, for the purged ear apprehends
Earth's import, not the eye late dazed:
The Voice said "Call my works thy friends!
At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?
God is it who transcends."

ASOLO: *Sept.* 6, 1889.

ROSNY.

WOE, he went galloping into the war,
Clara, Clara!
Let us two dream: shall he 'scape with a scar?
Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace
Making for manhood which nowise we mar:
See, while I kiss it, the flush on his face —
Rosny, Rosny!

Light does he laugh: "With your love in my soul" —
(Clara, Clara!)
"How could I other than — sound, safe and whole —
Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet stand

Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's goal,
Who won the race kneels, craves reward at your hand —
Rosny, Rosny?"

Ay, but if certain who envied should see!
Clara, Clara,
Certain who simper: "The hero for me
Hardly of life were so chary as miss
Death — death and fame — that 's love's guerdon when She
Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice fell on this
Rosny, Rosny!"

So, — go on dreaming, — he lies mid a heap
(Clara, Clara,)
Of the slain by his hand: what is death but a sleep?
Dead, with my portrait displayed on his breast:
Love wrought his undoing: "No prudence could keep
The love-maddened wretch from his fate." That is best,
Rosny, Rosny!

DUBIETY.

I WILL be happy if but for once:
Only help me, Autumn weather,
Me and my cares to screen, ensconce
In luxury's sofa-lap of leather!

Sleep? Nay, comfort — with just a cloud
Suffusing day too clear and bright:
Eve's essence, the single drop allowed
To sully, like milk, Noon's water-white.

Let gauziness shade, not shroud, — adjust,
Dim and not deaden, — somehow sheathe
Aught sharp in the rough world's busy thrust,
If it reach me through dreaming's vapor-wreath.

Be life so, all things ever the same!
For, what has disarmed the world? Outside,
Quiet and peace: inside, nor blame
Nor want, nor wish whate'er betide.

What is it like that has happened before?
A dream? No dream, more real by much.
A vision? But fanciful days of yore
Brought many: mere musing seems not such.

Perhaps but a memory, after all!
— Of what came once when a woman leant
To feel for my brow where her kiss might fall.
Truth ever, truth only the excellent!

NOW.

Out of your whole life give but a moment!
All of your life that has gone before,
All to come after it, — so you ignore,
So you make perfect the present, — condense,
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,
Thought and feeling and soul and sense —
Merged in a moment which gives me at last
You around me for once, you beneath me, above me —
Me — sure that despite of time future, time past, —
This tick of our life-time's one moment you love me!
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet —

The moment eternal — just that and no more —
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

HUMILITY.

What girl but, having gathered flowers,
Stript the beds and spoilt the bowers,
From the lapful light she carries
Drops a careless bud? — nor tarries
To regain the waif and stray:
"Store enough for home" — she 'll say.

So say I too: give your lover
Heaps of loving — under, over,
Whelm him — make the one the wealthy!
Am I all so poor who — stealthy
Work it was! — picked up what fell:
Not the worst bud — who can tell?

POETICS.

"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish so, Love?
"Flower she is, my rose" — or else "My very swan is she" —
Or perhaps "Yon maid-moon, blessing earth below, Love,
That art thou!" — to them, belike: no such vain words from me.

"Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath," I chide it:
"Bend thy neck its best, swan, — hers the whiter curve!"

Be the moon the moon : my Love I place beside it ;
What is she ? Her human self, — no lower word
will serve.

SUMMUM BONUM.

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag
of one bee :
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart
of one gem :
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of
the sea :
Breath and bloom, shade and shine, — wonder,
wealth, and — how far above them —
Truth, that 's brighter than gem,
Trust, that 's purer than pearl, —
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe — all were
for me
In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL, A GIRL.

A simple ring with a single stone
To the vulgar eye no stone of price :
Whisper the right word, that alone —
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('t is I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy praise
Utter the true word — out and away

Escapes her soul: I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole — by a minute's birth —
Through the love in a girl!

SPECULATIVE.

Others may need new life in Heaven —
Man, Nature, Art — made new, assume!
Man with new mind old sense to leaven,
Nature — new light to clear old gloom,
Art that breaks bounds, gets soaring-room.

I shall pray: "Fugitive as precious —
Minutes which passed, — return, remain!
Let earth's old life once more enmesh us,
You with old pleasure, me — old pain,
So we but meet nor part again!"

WHITE WITCHCRAFT.

If you and I could change to beasts, what beast should either be?
Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn fox then, I decree!
Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes! Now do your worst on me!

And thus you think to spite your friend — turned loathsome? What, a toad?
So, all men shrink and shun me! Dear men, pursue your road!
Leave but my crevice in the stone, a reptile's fit abode!

Now say your worst, Canidia! "He 's loathsome,
I allow:
There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath his puckered brow:
But see his eyes that follow mine — love lasts there anyhow."

BAD DREAMS. I.

Last night I saw you in my sleep:
And how your charm of face was changed!
I asked "Some love, some faith you keep?"
You answered "Faith gone, love estranged."

Whereat I woke — a twofold bliss:
Waking was one, but next there came
This other: "Though I felt, for this,
My heart break, I loved on the same."

BAD DREAMS. II.

You in the flesh and here —
Your very self! Now, wait!
One word! May I hope or fear?
Must I speak in love or hate?
Stay while I ruminate!

The fact and each circumstance
Dare you disown? Not you!
That vast dome, that huge dance,
And the gloom which overgrew
A — possibly festive crew!

For why should men dance at all —
  Why women — a crowd of both —
Unless they are gay? Strange ball —
  Hands and feet plighting troth,
Yet partners enforced and loth!

Of who danced there, no shape
  Did I recognize: thwart, perverse,
Each grasped each, past escape
  In a whirl or weary or worse:
Man's sneer met woman's curse,

While he and she toiled as if
  Their guardian set galley-slaves
To supple chained limbs grown stiff:
  Unmanacled trulls and knaves —
The lash for who misbehaves!

And a gloom was, all the while,
  Deeper and deeper yet
O'ergrowing the rank and file
  Of that army of haters — set
To mimic love's fever-fret.

By the wall-side close I crept,
  Avoiding the livid maze,
And, safely so far, outstepped
  On a chamber — a chapel, says
My memory or betrays —

Closet-like, kept aloof
  From unseemly witnessing
What sport made floor and roof
  Of the Devil's palace ring
While his Damned amused their king.

Ay, for a low lamp burned,
And a silence lay about
What I, in the midst, discerned
Though dimly till, past doubt,
'T was a sort of throne stood out —

High seat with steps, at least:
And the topmost step was filled
By — whom? What vestured priest?
A stranger to me, — his guild,
His cult, unreconciled

To my knowledge how guild and cult
Are clothed in this world of ours:
I pondered, but no result
Came to — unless that Giaours
So worship the Lower Powers.

When suddenly who entered?
Who knelt — did you guess I saw?
Who — raising that face where centred
Allegiance to love and law
So lately — off-casting awe,

Down-treading reserve, away
Thrusting respect . . . but mine
Stands firm — firm still shall stay!
Ask Satan! for I decline
To tell — what I saw, in fine!

Yet here in the flesh you come —
Your same self, form and face, —
In the eyes, mirth still at home!
On the lips, that commonplace
Perfection of honest grace!

Yet your errand is — needs must be
To palliate — well, explain,
Expurgate in some degree
Your soul of its ugly stain.
Oh, you — the good in grain —

How was it your white took tinge?
"A mere dream" — never object!
Sleep leaves a door on hinge
Whence soul, ere our flesh suspect,
Is off and away: detect

Her vagaries when loose, who can!
Be she pranksome, be she prude,
Disguise with the day began:
With the night — ah, what ensued
From draughts of a drink hell-brewed?

Then She: "What a queer wild dream!
And perhaps the best fun is —
Myself had its fellow — I seem
Scarce awake from yet. 'T was this —
Shall I tell you? First, a kiss!

"For the fault was just your own, —
'T is myself expect apology:
You warned me to let alone
(Since our studies were mere philology)
That ticklish (you said) Anthology.

"So, I dreamed that I passed *exam*
Till a question posed me sore:
'Who translated this epigram
By — an author we best ignore?'
And I answered 'Hannah More'!"

BAD DREAMS. III.

This was my dream: I saw a Forest
Old as the earth, no track nor trace
Of unmade man. Thou, Soul, explorest —
Though in a trembling rapture — space
Immeasurable! Shrubs, turned trees,
Trees that touch heaven, support its frieze
Studded with sun and moon and star:
While — oh, the enormous growths that bar
Mine eye from penetrating past
Their tangled twine where lurks — nay, lives
Royally lone, some brute-type cast
I' the rough, time cancels, man forgives.

On, Soul! I saw a lucid City
Of architectural device
Every way perfect. Pause for pity,
Lightning! nor leave a cicatrice
On those bright marbles, dome and spire,
Structures palatial, — streets which mire
Dares not defile, paved all too fine
For human footstep's smirch, not thine —
Proud solitary traverser,
My Soul, of silent lengths of way —
With what ecstatic dread, aver,
Lest life start sanctioned by thy stay!

Ah, but the last sight was the hideous!
A City, yes, — a Forest, true, —
But each devouring each. Perfidious
Snake-plants had strangled what I knew
Was a pavilion once: each oak

Held on his horns some spoil he broke
By surreptitiously beneath
Upthrusting : pavements, as with teeth,
Griped huge weed widening crack and split
In squares and circles stone-work erst.
Oh, Nature — good ! Oh, Art — no whit
Less worthy ! Both in one — accurst !

BAD DREAMS. IV.

It happened thus : my slab, though new,
Was getting weather-stained, — beside,
Herbage, balm, peppermint o'ergrew
Letter and letter : till you tried
Somewhat, the Name was scarce descried.

That strong stern man my lover came :
— Was he my lover ? Call him, pray,
My life's cold critic bent on blame
Of all poor I could do or say
To make me worth his love one day —

One far day when, by diligent
And dutiful amending faults,
Foibles, all weaknesses which went
To challenge and excuse assaults
Of culture wronged by taste that halts —

Discrepancies should mar no plan
Symmetric of the qualities
Claiming respect from — say — a man
That's strong and stern. "Once more he pries
Into me with those critic eyes!"

No question! so — "Conclude, condemn
Each failure my poor self avows!
Leave to its fate all you contemn!
There's Solomon's selected spouse:
Earth needs must hold such maids — choose them!"

Why, he was weeping! Surely gone
Sternness and strength: with eyes to ground
And voice a broken monotone —
"Only be as you were! Abound
In foibles, faults, — laugh, robed and crowned

"As Folly's veriest queen, — care I
One feather-fluff? Look pity, Love,
On prostrate me — your foot shall try
This forehead's use — mount thence above,
And reach what Heaven you dignify!"

Now, what could bring such change about?
The thought perplexed: till, following
His gaze upon the ground, — why, out
Came all the secret! So, a thing
Thus simple has deposed my king!

For, spite of weeds that strove to spoil
Plain reading on the lettered slab,
My name was clear enough — no soil
Effaced the date when one chance stab
Of scorn . . . if only ghosts might blab!

INAPPREHENSIVENESS.

We two stood simply friend-like side by side,
Viewing a twilight country far and wide,
Till she at length broke silence. "How it towers
Yonder, the ruin o'er this vale of ours!
The West's faint flare behind it so relieves
Its rugged outline — sight perhaps deceives,
Or I could almost fancy that I see
A branch wave plain — belike some wind-sown tree
Chance-rooted where a missing turret was.
What would I give for the perspective glass
At home, to make out if 't is really so!
Has Ruskin noticed here at Asolo
That certain weed-growths on the ravaged wall
Seem" . . . something that I could not say at all,
My thought being rather — as absorbed she sent
Look onward after look from eyes distent
With longing to reach Heaven's gate left ajar —
"Oh, fancies that might be, oh, facts that are!
What of a wilding? By you stands, and may
So stand unnoticed till the Judgment Day,
One who, if once aware that your regard
Claimed what his heart holds, — woke, as from its sward
The flower, the dormant passion, so to speak —
Then what a rush of life would startling wreak
Revenge on your inapprehensive stare
While, from the ruin and the West's faint flare,
You let your eyes meet mine, touch what you term
Quietude — that 's an universe in germ —
The dormant passion needing but a look
To burst into immense life!"

" No, the book
Which noticed how the wall-growths wave " said she
" Was not by Ruskin."
I said " Vernon Lee ? "

WHICH ?

So, the three Court-ladies began
Their trial of who judged best
In esteeming the love of a man :
Who preferred with most reason was thereby confessed
Boy-Cupid's exemplary catcher and cager ;
An Abbé crossed legs to decide on the wager.

First the Duchesse : " Mine for me —
Who were it but God's for Him,
And the King's for — who but he ?
Both faithful and loyal, one grace more shall brim
His cup with perfection : a lady's true lover,
He holds — save his God and his king — none above her."

" I require " — outspoke the Marquise —
" Pure thoughts, ay, but also fine deeds :
Play the paladin must he, to please
My whim, and — to prove my knight's service exceeds
Your saint's and your loyalist's praying and kneeling —
Show wounds, each wide mouth to my mercy appealing."

Then the Comtesse : " My choice be a wretch,
Mere losel in body and soul,
Thrice accurst ! What care I, so he stretch

Arms to me his sole saviour, love's ultimate goal,
Out of earth and men's noise — names of 'infidel,'
'traitor,'
Cast up at him? Crown me, crown's adjudicator!"

And the Abbé uncrossed his legs,
Took snuff, a reflective pinch,
Broke silence: "The question begs
Much pondering ere I pronounce. Shall I flinch?
The love which to one and one only has reference
Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's preference."

THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG.

Crescenzio, the Pope's Legate at the High Council,
Trent,
— Year Fifteen hundred twenty-two, March Twenty-
five — intent
On writing letters to the Pope till late into the night,
Rose, weary, to refresh himself, and saw a monstrous
sight:
(I give mine Author's very words: he penned, I
reindite.)

A black Dog of vast bigness, eyes flaming, ears that
hung
Down to the very ground almost, into the chamber
sprung
And made directly for him, and laid himself right
under
The table where Crescenzio wrote — who called in fear
and wonder

His servants in the ante-room, commanded every one
To look for and find out the beast: but, looking, they found none.

The Cardinal fell melancholy, then sick, soon after died:
And at Verona, as he lay on his death-bed, he cried
Aloud to drive away the Dog that leapt on his bed-side.
Heaven keep us Protestants from harm: the rest . . . no ill betide!

THE POPE AND THE NET.

What, he on whom our voices unanimously ran,
Made Pope at our last Conclave? Full low his life began:
His father earned the daily bread as just a fisherman.

So much the more his boy minds book, gives proof of mother-wit,
Becomes first Deacon, and then Priest, then Bishop: see him sit
No less than Cardinal ere long, while no one cries "Unfit!"

But some one smirks, some other smiles, jogs elbow and nods head:
Each winks at each: "I'-faith, a rise! Saint Peter's net, instead
Of sword and keys, is come in vogue!" You think he blushes red?

Not he, of humble holy heart! "Unworthy me!"
he sighs:
"From fisher's drudge to Church's prince — it is
indeed a rise:
So, here's my way to keep the fact forever in my
eyes!"

And straightway in his palace-hall, where commonly
is set
Some coat-of-arms, some portraiture ancestral, lo, we
met
His mean estate's reminder in his fisher-father's net!

Which step conciliates all and some, stops cavil in a
trice:
"The humble holy heart that holds of new-born pride
no spice!
He's just the saint to choose for Pope!" Each adds
"'T is my advice."

So, Pope he was: and when we flocked — its sacred
slipper on —
To kiss his foot, we lifted eyes, alack the thing was
gone —
That guarantee of lowlihead, — eclipsed that star which
shone!

Each eyed his fellow, one and all kept silence. I cried
"Pish!
I'll make me spokesman for the rest, express the
common wish.
Why, Father, is the net removed?" "Son, it hath
caught the fish."

THE BEAN-FEAST.

He was the man — Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that swineherd's son:
He knew the right thing, did it, and thanked God when 't was done:
But of all he had to thank for, my fancy somehow leans
To thinking, what most moved him was a certain meal on beans.

For one day, as his wont was, in just enough disguise
As he went exploring wickedness, — to see with his own eyes
If law had due observance in the city's entrail dark
As well as where, i' the open, crime stood an obvious mark, —

He chanced, in a blind alley, on a tumble-down once house
Now hovel, vilest structure in Rome the ruinous:
And, as his tact impelled him, Sixtus adventured bold,
To learn how lowliest subjects bore hunger, toil, and cold.

There sat they at high-supper — man and wife, lad and lass,
Poor as you please but cleanly all and care-free: pain that was
— Forgotten, pain as sure to be let bide aloof its time, —
Mightily munched the brave ones — what mattered gloom or grime?

Said Sixtus "Feast, my children! who works hard needs eat well.
I'm just a supervisor, would hear what you can tell.
Do any wrongs want righting? The Father tries his best,
But, since he 's only mortal, sends such as I to test
The truth of all that 's told him — how folk like you may fare:
Come! — only don't stop eating — when mouth has words to spare —

"You" — smiled he — "play the spokesman, bell-wether of the flock!
Are times good, masters gentle? Your grievances unlock!
How of your work and wages? — pleasures, if such may be —
Pains, as such are for certain." Thus smiling questioned he.

But somehow, spite of smiling, awe stole upon the group —
An inexpressible surmise: why should a priest thus stoop —
Pry into what concerned folk? Each visage fell. Aware,
Cries Sixtus interposing: "Nay, children, have no care!

"Fear nothing! Who employs me requires the plain truth. Pelf
Beguiles who should inform me: so, I inform myself.
See!" And he threw his hood back, let the close vesture ope,
Showed face, and where on tippet the cross lay: 't was the Pope.

Imagine the joyful wonder! "How shall the like o
us —
Poor souls — requite such blessing of our rude bean-
feast?" "Thus —
Thus amply!" laughed Pope Sixtus. "I early rise,
sleep late:
Who works may eat: they tempt me, your beans
there: spare a plate!"

Down sat he on the door-step: 't was they this time
said grace:
He ate up the last mouthful, wiped lips, and then, with
face
Turned heavenward, broke forth thankful: "Not now,
that earth obeys
Thy word in mine, that through me the peoples know
Thy ways —
But that Thy care extendeth to Nature's homely wants,
And, while man's mind is strengthened, Thy goodness
nowise scants
Man's body of its comfort, — that I whom kings and
queens
Crouch to, pick crumbs from off my table, relish beans!
The thunders I but seem to launch, there plain Thy
hand all see:
That I have appetite, digest, and thrive — that boon 's
for me."

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG.

Frowned the Laird on the Lord: "So, red-handed
I catch thee?
Death-doomed by our Law of the Border!
We 've a gallows outside and a chiel to despatch thee:
Who trespasses — hangs: all 's in order."

He met frown with smile, did the young English
gallant:
Then the Laird's dame: "Nay, Husband, I beg!
He 's comely: be merciful! Grace for the callant
— If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg!"

"No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours do I marry:
Grant rather the gallows!" laughed he.
"Foul fare kith and kin of you — why do you tarry?"
"To tame your fierce temper!" quoth she.

"Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him fast for a
week:
Cold, darkness and hunger work wonders:
Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will squeak,
And 'it rains' soon succeed to 'it thunders.'"

A week did he bide in the cold and the dark
— Not hunger: for duly at morning
In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark
Chirped "Muckle-mouth Meg still ye 're scorning?

"Go hang, but here 's parritch to hearten ye first!"
"Did Meg's muckle-mouth boast within some
Such music as yours, mine should match it or burst:
No frog-jaws! So tell folk, my Winsome!"

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole's door set wide,
Out he marched, and there waited the lassie:
"Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for a bride!
Consider! Sky 's blue and turf 's grassy:

"Life 's sweet: shall I say ye wed Muckle-mouth Meg?"
"Not I" quoth the stout heart: "too eerie
The mouth that can swallow a bubblyjock's egg:
Shall I let it munch mine? Never, Dearie!"

"Not Muckle-mouth Meg? Wow, the obstinate man!
Perhaps he would rather wed me!"
"Ay, would he — with just for a dowry your can!"
"I 'm Muckle-mouth Meg" chirruped she.

"Then so — so — so — so —" as he kissed her apace —
"Will I widen thee out till thou turnest
From Margaret Minnikin-mou', by God's grace,
To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest!"

ARCADES AMBO.

A. You blame me that I ran away?
Why, Sir, the enemy advanced:
Balls flew about, and — who can say
But one, if I stood firm, had glanced
In my direction? Cowardice?
I only know we don't live twice,
Therefore — shun death, is my advice.

B. Shun death at all risks? Well, at some!
True, I myself, Sir, though I scold
The cowardly, by no means come
Under reproof as overbold
— I, who would have no end of brutes
Cut up alive to guess what suits
My case and saves my toe from shoots.

THE LADY AND THE PAINTER.

She. Yet womanhood you reverence,
So you profess!
He. With heart and soul.
She. Of which fact this is evidence!
To help Art-study, — for some dole
Of certain wretched shillings, — you
Induce a woman — virgin too —
To strip and stand stark-naked?
He. True.

She. Nor feel you so degrade her?
He. What
— (Excuse the interruption) — clings
Half-savage-like around your hat?
She. Ah, do they please you? Wild-bird-wings.
Next season, — Paris-prints assert, —
We must go feathered to the skirt:
My modiste keeps on the alert.

Owls, hawks, jays — swallows most approve . . .
He. Dare I speak plainly?
She. Oh, I trust!

He. Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move
In heart and soul of me disgust
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,
And stand — for thanks, not shillings — bare,
To help Art like my Model there.
She well knew what absolved her — praise
In me for God's surpassing good,
Who granted to my reverent gaze
A type of purest womanhood.
You — clothed with murder of His best
Of harmless beings — stand the test!
What is it *you* know?
She. That you jest!

PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE.

Stop rowing! This one of our bye-canals
O'er a certain bridge you have to cross
That 's named "Of the Angel": listen why!
The name "Of the Devil" too much appalls
Venetian acquaintance, so — his the loss,
While the gain goes . . . look on high!

An angel visibly guards yon house:
Above each scutcheon — a pair — stands he,
Enfolds them with droop of either wing:
The family's fortune were perilous
Did he thence depart — you will soon agree,
If I hitch into verse the thing.

For, once on a time, this house belonged
To a lawyer of note, with law and to spare,
But also with overmuch lust of gain:

In the matter of law you were nowise wronged,
But alas for the lucre ! He picked you bare
To the bone. Did folk complain ?

" I exact " growled he " work's rightful due :
'T is folk seek me, not I seek them.
Advice at its price ! They succeed or fail,
Get law in each case — and a lesson too :
Keep clear of the Courts — is advice *ad rem :*
They 'll remember, I 'll be bail ! "

So, he pocketed fee without a qualm.
What reason for squeamishness ? Labor done,
To play he betook him with lightened heart,
Ate, drank and made merry with song or psalm,
Since the yoke of the Church is an easy one —
Fits neck nor causes smart.

Brief : never was such an extortionate
Rascal — the word has escaped my teeth
And yet — (all 's down in a book no ass
Indited, believe me !) — this reprobate
Was punctual at prayer-time : gold lurked beneath
Alloy of the rankest brass.

For, play the extortioner as he might,
Fleece folk each day and all day long,
There was this redeeming circumstance :
He never lay down to sleep at night
But he put up a prayer first, brief yet strong,
" Our Lady avert mischance ! "

Now it happened at close of a fructuous week,
" I must ask " quoth he " some Saint to dine :
I want that widow well out of my ears

With her ailing and wailing. Who bade her seek
Redress at my hands? 'She was wronged!' Folk
whine
If to Law wrong right appears.

"Matteo da Bascio — he's my man!
No less than Chief of the Capucins:
His presence will surely suffumigate
My house — fools think lies under a ban
If somebody loses what somebody wins.
Hark, there he knocks at the grate!

"Come in, thou blessed of Mother Church!
I go and prepare — to bid, that is,
My trusty and diligent servitor
Get all things in readiness. Vain the search
Through Venice for one to compare with this
My model of ministrants: for —

"For — once again, nay, three times over,
My helpmate 's an ape! so intelligent,
I train him to drudge at household work:
He toils and he moils, I live in clover:
Oh, you shall see! There 's a goodly scent —
From his cooking, or I 'm a Turk!

"Scarce need to descend and supervise:
I 'll do it, however: wait here awhile!"
So, down to the kitchen gayly scuttles
Our host, nor notes the alarmed surmise
Of the holy man. "O depth of guile!
He blindly guzzles and guttles,

"While — who is it dresses the food and pours
The liquor? Some fiend — I make no doubt —
In likeness of — which of the loathly brutes?

An ape! Where hides he? No bull that gores,
No bear that hugs — 't is the mock and flout
Of an ape, fiend's face that suits.

"So — out with thee, creature, wherever thou hidest!
I charge thee, by virtue of . . . right do I judge! 80
There skulks he perdue, crouching under the bed.
Well done! What, forsooth, in beast's shape thou confidest?
I know and would name thee but that I begrudge
Breath spent on such carrion. Instead —

"I adjure thee by ——" "Stay!" laughed the portent that rose
From floor up to ceiling: "No need to adjure!
See Satan in person, late ape by command
Of Him thou adjurest in vain. A saint's nose
Scents brimstone though incense be burned for a lure.
Yet, hence! for I 'm safe, understand! 90

"'T is my charge to convey to fit punishment's place
This lawyer, my liegeman, for cruelty wrought
On his clients, the widow and orphan, poor souls
He has plagued by exactions which proved law's disgrace,
Made equity void and to nothingness brought
God's pity. Fiends, on with fresh coals!"

"Stay!" nowise confounded, withstands Hell its match:
"How comes it, were truth in this story of thine,
God's punishment suffered a minute's delay?
Weeks, months have elapsed since thou squattedst at watch 100
For a spring on thy victim: what caused thee decline
Advantage till challenged to-day?"

"That challenge I meet with contempt," quoth the fiend.
"Thus much I acknowledge: the man 's armed in mail;
I wait till a joint 's loose, then quick ply my claws.
Thy friend's one good custom — he knows not — has screened
His flesh hitherto from what else would assail:
At 'Save me, Madonna!' I pause.

"That prayer did the losel but once pretermit,
My pounce were upon him. I keep me attent:
He 's in safety but till he 's caught napping. Enough!"
"Ay, enough!" smiles the saint — "for the biter is bit,
The spy caught in somnolence. Vanish! I 'm sent
To smooth up what fiends do in rough."

"I vanish? Through wall or through roof?" the ripost
Grinned gayly. "My orders were — 'Leave not unharmed
The abode of this lawyer! Do damage to prove
'T was for something thou quittedst the land of the lost —
To add to their number this unit!' Though charmed
From descent there, on earth that 's above

"I may haply amerce him." "So do, and begone,
I command thee! For, look! Though there 's doorway behind
And window before thee, go straight through the wall,
Leave a breach in the brickwork, a gap in the stone
For who passes to stare at!" "Spare speech! I 'm resigned:
Here goes!" roared the goblin, as all —

Wide bat-wings, spread arms and legs, tail out a-stream,
Crash obstacles went, right and left, as he soared
Or else sank, was clean gone through the hole anyhow.
The Saint returned thanks: then a satisfied gleam
On the bald polished pate showed that triumph was scored.
"To dinner with appetite now!"

Down he trips. "In good time!" smirks the host.
"Didst thou scent
Rich savor of roast meat? Where hides he, my ape?
Look alive, be alert! He's away to wash plates.
Sit down, Saint! What's here? Dost examine a rent
In the napkin thou twistest and twirlest? Agape . . .
Ha, blood is it drips nor abates

"From thy wringing a cloth, late was lavendered fair?
What means such a marvel?" "Just this does it mean:
I convince and convict thee of sin!" answers straight
The Saint, wringing on, wringing ever — O rare! —
Blood — blood from a napery snow not more clean.
"A miracle shows thee thy state!

"See — blood thy extortions have wrung from the flesh
Of thy clients who, sheep-like, arrived to be shorn
And left thee — or fleeced to the quick or so flayed
That, behold, their blood gurgles and grumbles afresh
To accuse thee! Ay, down on thy knees, get up sworn
To restore! Restitution once made,

"Sin no more! Dost thou promise? Absolved, then, arise!
Upstairs follow me! Art amazed at yon breach?
Who battered and shattered and scattered, escape

From thy purlieus obtaining? That Father of Lies
Thou wast wont to extol for his feats, all and each
The Devil's disguised as thine ape!"

Be sure that our lawyer was torn by remorse,
Shed tears in a flood, vowed and swore so to alter
His ways that how else could our Saint but declare
He was cleansed of past sin? "For sin future — fare worse
Thou undoubtedly wilt," warned the Saint, "shouldst thou falter
One whit!" "Oh, for that have no care!

"I am firm in my purposed amendment. But, prithee,
Must ever affront and affright me yon gap?
Who made it for exit may find it of use
For entrance as easy. If, down in his smithy
He forges me fetters — when heated, mayhap,
He'll up with an armful! Broke loose —

"How bar him out henceforth?" "Judiciously urged!"
Was the good man's reply. "How to balk him is plain.
There's nothing the Devil objects to so much,
So speedily flies from, as one of those purged
Of his presence, the angels who erst formed his train —
His, their emperor. Choose one of such!

"Get fashioned his likeness and set him on high
At back of the breach thus adroitly filled up:
Display him as guard of two scutcheons, thy arms:
I warrant no devil attempts to get by
And disturb thee so guarded. Eat, drink, dine and sup
In thy rectitude, safe from alarms!"

So said and so done. See, the angel has place
Where the Devil had passage! All 's down in a book.
Gainsay me? Consult it! Still faithless? Trust *me?*
Trust Father Boverio who gave me the case
In his Annals — gets of it, by hook or by crook,
Two confirmative witnesses: three

Are surely enough to establish an act:
And thereby we learn — would we ascertain truth —
To trust wise tradition which took, at the time,
Note that served till slow history ventured on fact,
Though folk have their fling at tradition forsooth!
Row, boys, fore and aft, rhyme and chime!

BEATRICE SIGNORINI.

This strange thing happened to a painter once:
Viterbo boasts the man among her sons
Of note, I seem to think: his ready tool
Picked up its precepts in Cortona's school —
That 's Pietro Berretini, whom they call
Cortona, these Italians: greatish-small,
Our painter was his pupil, by repute
His match if not his master absolute,
Though whether he spoiled fresco more or less,
And what 's its fortune, scarce repays your guess.
Still, for one circumstance, I save his name
— Francesco Romanelli: do the same!
He went to Rome and painted: there he knew
A wonder of a woman painting too —
For she, at least, was no Cortona's drudge:
Witness that ardent fancy-shape — I judge
A semblance of her soul — she called "Desire"

With starry front for guide, where sits the fire
She left to brighten Buonarroti's house.
If you see Florence, pay that piece your vows
Though blockhead Baldinucci's mind, imbued
With monkish morals, bade folk "Drape the nude
And stop the scandal!" quoth the record prim
I borrow this of: hang his book and him!
At Rome, then, where these fated ones met first,
The blossom of his life had hardly burst
While hers was blooming at full beauty's stand:
No less Francesco — when half-ripe he scanned
Consummate Artemisia — grew one want
To have her his and make her ministrant
With every gift of body and of soul
To him. In vain. Her sphery self was whole —
Might only touch his orb at Art's sole point.
Suppose he could persuade her to enjoint
Her life — past, present, future — all in his
At Art's sole point by some explosive kiss
Of love through lips, would love's success defeat
Artistry's haunting curse — the Incomplete?
Artists no doubt they both were, — what beside
Was she? who long had felt heart, soul spread wide
Her life out, knowing much and loving well,
On either side Art's narrow space where fell
Reflection from his own speck: but the germ
Of individual genius — what we term
The very self, the God-gift whence had grown
Heart's life and soul's life, — how make that his own?
Vainly his Art, reflected, smiled in small
On Art's one facet of her ampler ball;
The rest, touch-free, took in, gave back heaven, earth,
All where he was not. Hope, well-nigh ere birth
Came to Desire, died off all-unfulfilled.

"What though in Art I stand the abler-skilled,"
(So he conceited: mediocrity
Turns on itself the self-transforming eye)
"If only Art were suing, mine would plead
To purpose: man — by nature I exceed
Woman the bounded: but how much beside
She boasts, would sue in turn and be denied!
Love her? My own wife loves me in a sort
That suits us both: she takes the world's report
Of what my work is worth, and, for the rest,
Concedes that, while his consort keeps her nest,
The eagle soars a licensed vagrant, lives
A wide free life which she at least forgives —
Good Beatricé Signorini! Well
And wisely did I choose her. But the spell
To subjugate this Artemisia — where?
She passionless? — she resolute to care
Nowise beyond the plain sufficiency
Of fact that she is she and I am I
— Acknowledged arbitrator for us both
In her life as in mine which she were loth
Even to learn the laws of? No, and no
Twenty times over! Ay, it must be so:
I for myself, alas!"
Whereon, instead
Of the checked lover's-utterance — why, he said
— Leaning above her easel: "Flesh is red"
(Or some such just remark) — "by no means white
As Guido's practice teaches: you are right."
Then came the better impulse: "What if pride
Were wisely trampled on, whate'er betide?
If I grow hers, not mine — join lives, confuse
Bodies and spirits, gain not her but lose
Myself to Artemisia? That were love!

Of two souls — one must bend, one rule above:
If I crouch under proudly, lord turned slave,
Were it not worthier both than if she gave
Herself — in treason to herself — to me?"

And, all the while, he felt it could not be.
Such love were true love: love that way who can!
Some one that's born half woman not whole man:
For man, prescribed man better or man worse,
Why, whether microcosm or universe,
What law prevails alike through great and small,
The world and man — world's miniature we call?
Male is the master. "That way" — smiled and sighed
Our true male estimator — "puts her pride
My wife in making me the outlet whence
She learns all Heaven allows: 't is my pretence
To paint: her lord should do what else but paint? 100
Do I break brushes, cloister me turned saint?
Then, best of all suits sanctity her spouse
Who acts for Heaven, allows and disallows
At pleasure, past appeal, the right, the wrong
In all things. That's my wife's way. But this strong
Confident Artemisia — an adept
In Art does she conceit herself? 'Except
In just this instance,' tell her, 'no one draws
More rigidly observant of the laws
Of right design: yet here, — permit me hint, — 110
If the acromion had a deeper dint,
That shoulder were perfection.' What surprise
— Nay scorn, shoots black fire from those startled eyes!
She to be lessoned in design forsooth!
I'm doomed and done for, since I spoke the truth.
Make my own work the subject of dispute —
Fails it of just perfection absolute

Somewhere? Those motors, flexors, — don't I know
Ser Santi, styled 'Tirititototo
The pencil-prig,' might blame them? Yet my wife —
Were he and his nicknamer brought to life,
Tito and Titian, to pronounce again —
Ask her who knows more — I or the great Twain
Our colorist and draughtsman!
"I help her,
Not she helps me; and neither shall demur
Because my portion is ——" he chose to think —
"Quite other than a woman's: I may drink
At many waters, must repose by none —
Rather arise and fare forth, having done
Duty to one new excellence the more,
Abler thereby, though impotent before
So much was gained of knowledge. Best depart
From this last lady I have learned by heart!"

Thus he concluded of himself — resigned
To play the man and master: "Man boasts mind:
Woman, man's sport calls mistress, to the same
Does body's suit and service. Would she claim
— My placid Beatricé-wife — pretence
Even to blame her lord if, going hence,
He wistfully regards one whom — did fate
Concede — he might accept queen, abdicate
Kingship because of? — one of no meek sort
But masterful as he: man's match in short?
Oh, there 's no secret I were best conceal!
Bicé shall know; and should a stray tear steal
From out the blue eye, stain the rose cheek — bah!
A smile, a word's gay reassurance — ah,
With kissing interspersed, — shall make amends,
Turn pain to pleasure."

"What, in truth so ends
Abruptly, do you say, our intercourse?"
Next day, asked Artemisia: "I'll divorce
Husband and wife no longer. Go your ways,
Leave Rome! Viterbo owns no equal, says
The by-word, for fair women: you, no doubt,
May boast a paragon all specks without,
Using the painter's privilege to choose
Among what's rarest. Will your wife refuse
Acceptance from — no rival — of a gift?
You paint the human figure I make shift
Humbly to reproduce: but, in my hours
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is — flowers.
Look now!"
She twitched aside a veiling cloth.
"Here is my keepsake — frame and picture both:
For see, the frame is all of flowers festooned
About an empty space, — left thus, to wound
No natural susceptibility:
How can I guess? 'T is you must fill, not I,
The central space with — her whom you like best!
That is your business, mine has been the rest.
But judge!"
How judge them? Each of us, in flowers,
Chooses his love, allies it with past hours,
Old meetings, vanished forms and faces: no —
Here let each favorite unmolested blow
For one heart's homage, no tongue's banal praise,
Whether the rose appealingly bade "Gaze
Your fill on me, sultana who dethrone
The gaudy tulip!" or 't was "Me alone
Rather do homage to, who lily am,
No unabashed rose!" "Do I vainly cram

My cup with sweets, your jonquil?" "Why forget
Vernal endearments with the violet?"
So they contested yet concerted, all
As one, to circle round about, enthrall
Yet, self-forgetting, push to prominence
The midmost wonder, gained no matter whence.

There 's a tale extant, in a book I conned
Long years ago, which treats of things beyond
The common, antique times and countries queer
And customs strange to match. "'T is said, last year,"
(Recounts my author,) "that the King had mind
To view his kingdom — guessed at from behind
A palace-window hitherto. Announced
No sooner was such purpose than 't was pounced
Upon by all the ladies of the land —
Loyal but light of life: they formed a band
Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since
Proudly they all combined to bear their prince.
Backs joined to breasts, — arms, legs, — nay, ankles, wrists,
Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and twists,
So interwoven lay that you believed
'T was one sole beast of burden which received
The monarch on its back, of breadth not scant
Since fifty girls made one white elephant."
So with the fifty flowers which shapes and hues
Blent, as I tell, and made one fast yet loose
Mixture of beauties, composite, distinct
No less in each combining flower that linked
With flower to form a fit environment
For — whom might be the painter's heart's intent
Thus, in the midst enhaloed, to enshrine?

"This glory-guarded middle space — is mine?
For me to fill?"
"For you, my Friend! We part,
Never perchance to meet again. Your Art —
What if I mean it — so to speak — shall wed
My own, be witness of the life we led
When sometimes it has seemed our souls near found
Each one the other as its mate — unbound
Had yours been haply from the better choice
— Beautiful Bicé: 't is the common voice,
The crowning verdict. Make whom you like best
Queen of the central space, and manifest
Your predilection for what flower beyond
All flowers finds favor with you. I am fond
Of — say — yon rose's rich predominance,
While you — what wonder? — more affect the glance
The gentler violet from its leafy screen
Ventures: so — choose your flower and paint your
queen!"

Oh but the man was ready, head as hand,
Instructed and adroit. "Just as you stand,
Stay and be made — would Nature but relent —
By Art immortal!"
Every implement
In tempting reach — a palette primed, each squeeze
Of oil-paint in its proper patch — with these,
Brushes, a veritable sheaf to grasp!
He worked as he had never dared.
"Unclasp
My Art from yours who can!" — he cried at length,
As down he threw the pencil — "Grace from Strength
Dissociate, from your flowery fringe detach
My face of whom it frames, — the feat will match

What that of Time should Time from me extract
Your memory, Artemisia!" And in fact, —
What with the pricking impulse, sudden glow
Of soul — head, hand co-operated so
That face was worthy of its frame, 't is said —
Perfect, suppose!
They parted. Soon instead
Of Rome was home, — of Artemisia — well,
The placid-perfect wife. And it befell
That after the first incontestably
Blessedest of all blisses (— wherefore try
Your patience with embracings and the rest
Due from Calypso's all-unwilling guest
To his Penelope?) — there somehow came
The coolness which as duly follows flame.
So, one day, "What if we inspect the gifts
My Art has gained us?"
Now the wife uplifts
A casket-lid, now tries a medal's chain
Round her own lithe neck, fits a ring in vain
— Too loose on the fine finger, — vows and swears
The jewel with two pendent pearls like pears
Betters a lady's bosom — witness else!
And so forth, while Ulysses smiles.
"Such spells
Subdue such natures — sex must worship toys
— Trinkets and trash: yet, ah, quite other joys
Must stir from sleep the passionate abyss
Of — such an one as her I know — not this
My gentle consort with the milk for blood!
Why, did it chance that in a careless mood
(In those old days, gone — never to return —
When we talked — she to teach and I to learn)
I dropped a word, a hint which might imply

Consorts exist — how quick flashed fire from eye,
Brow blackened, lip was pinched by furious lip!
I needed no reminder of my slip:
One warning taught me wisdom. Whereas here . . .
Aha, a sportive fancy! Eh, what fear
Of harm to follow? Just a whim indulged!

"My Beatricé, there's an undivulged
Surprise in store for you: the moment's fit
For letting loose a secret: out with it!
Tributes to worth, you rightly estimate
These gifts of Prince and Bishop, Church and State:
Yet, may I tell you? Tastes so disagree!
There's one gift, preciousest of all to me,
I doubt if you would value as well worth
The obvious sparkling gauds that men unearth
For toy-cult mainly of you womankind;
Such make you marvel, I concede: while blind
The sex proves to the greater marvel here
I veil to balk its envy. Be sincere!
Say, should you search creation far and wide,
Was ever face like this?"

He drew aside
The veil, displayed the flower-framed portrait kept
For private delectation.

No adept
In florist's lore more accurately named
And praised or, as appropriately, blamed
Specimen after specimen of skill,
Than Bicé. "Rightly placed the daffodil —
Scarcely so right the blue germander. Gray
Good mouse-ear! Hardly your auricula
Is powdered white enough. It seems to me

Scarlet not crimson, that anemone:
But there 's amends in the pink saxifrage.
O darling dear ones, let me disengage
You innocents from what your harmlessness
Clasps lovingly! Out thou from their caress,
Serpent!"
Whereat forth-flashing from her coils
On coils of hair, the *spilla* in its toils
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything kept
To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt
And — woe to all inside the coronal!
Stab followed stab, — cut, slash, she ruined all
The masterpiece. Alack for eyes and mouth
And dimples and endearment — North and South,
East, West, the tatters in a fury flew:
There yawned the circlet. What remained to do?
She flung the weapon, and, with folded arms
And mien defiant of such low alarms
As death and doom beyond death, Bicé stood
Passively statuesque, in quietude
Awaiting judgment.
And out judgment burst
With frank unloading of love's laughter, first
Freed from its unsuspected source. Some throe
Must needs unlock love's prison-bars, let flow
The joyance.
"Then you ever were, still are,
And henceforth shall be — no occulted star
But my resplendent Bicé, sun-revealed,
Full-rondure! Woman-glory unconcealed,
So front me, find and claim and take your own —
My soul and body yours and yours alone,
As you are mine, mine wholly! Heart's love, take —
Use your possession — stab or stay at will

Here — hating, saving — woman with the skill
To make man beast or god ! ”
And so it proved :
For, as beseemed new godship, thus he loved,
Past power to change, until his dying-day, —
Good fellow ! And I fain would hope — some say
Indeed for certain — that our painter's toils
At fresco-splashing, finer stroke in oils,
Were not so mediocre after all ;
Perhaps the work appears unduly small
From having loomed too large in old esteem,
Patronized by late Papacy. I seem
Myself to have cast eyes on certain work
In sundry galleries, no judge needs shirk
From moderately praising. He designed
Correctly, nor in color lagged behind
His age : but both in Florence and in Rome
The elder race so make themselves at home
That scarce we give a glance to ceilingfuls
Of such like as Francesco. Still, one culls
From out the heaped laudations of the time
The pretty incident I put in rhyme.

FLUTE–MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT.

He. Ah, the bird-like fluting
Through the ash-tops yonder —
Bullfinch-bubblings, soft sounds suiting
What sweet thoughts, I wonder ?
Fine-pearled notes that surely
Gather, dewdrop-fashion,
Deep-down in some heart which purely
Secrets globuled passion —

Passion insuppressive —
  Such is piped, for certain;
Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive
  'T is, your ash-tops curtain.

Would your ash-tops open
  We might spy the player —
Seek and find some sense which no pen
  Yet from singer, sayer,
Ever has extracted:
  Never, to my knowledge,
Yet has pedantry enacted
  That, in Cupid's College,
Just this variation
  Of the old old yearning
Should by plain speech have salvation,
  Yield new men new learning.

"Love!" but what love, nicely
  New from old disparted,
Would the player teach precisely?
  First of all, he started
In my brain Assurance —
  Trust — entire Contentment —
Passion proved by much endurance;
  Then came — not resentment,
No, but simply Sorrow:
  What was seen had vanished:
Yesterday so blue! To-morrow
  Blank, all sunshine banished.

Hark! 'T is Hope resurges,
  Struggling through obstruction —
Forces a poor smile which verges
  On Joy's introduction.

Now, perhaps, mere Musing:
"Holds earth such a wonder?
Fairy-mortal, soul-sense-fusing
Past thought's power to sunder!"
What? calm Acquiescence?
"Daisied turf gives room to
Trefoil, plucked once in her presence —
Growing by her tomb too!"

She. All 's your fancy-spinning!
Here 's the fact: a neighbor
Never-ending, still beginning,
Recreates his labor:
Deep o'er desk he drudges,
Adds, divides, subtracts and
Multiplies, until he judges
Noonday-hour's exact sand
Shows the hourglass emptied:
Then comes lawful leisure,
Minutes rare from toil exempted,
Fit to spend in pleasure.

Out then with — what treatise?
Youth's Complete Instructor
How to play the Flute. Quid petis?
Follow Youth's conductor
On and on, through *Easy*,
Up to *Harder, Hardest*
Flute-piece, till thou, flautist wheezy,
Possibly discardest
Tootlings hoarse and husky,
Mayst expend with courage
Breath — on tunes once bright now dusky —
Meant to cool thy porridge.

That 's an air of Tulou's
He maltreats persistent,
Till as lief I 'd hear some Zulu's
Bone-piped bag, breath-distent,
Madden native dances.
I 'm the man's familiar :
Unexpectedness enhances
What your ear's auxiliar
— Fancy — finds suggestive.
Listen ! That 's *legato*
Rightly played, his fingers restive
Touch as if *staccato*.

He. Ah, you trick-betrayer !
Telling tales, unwise one ?
So the secret of the player
Was — he could surprise one
Well-nigh into trusting
Here was a musician
Skilled consummately, yet lusting
Through no vile ambition
After making captive
All the world, — rewarded
Amply by one stranger's rapture,
Common praise discarded.

So, without assistance
Such as music rightly
Needs and claims, — defying distance,
Overleaping lightly
Obstacles which hinder, —
He, for my approval,
All the same and all the kinder
Made mine what might move all

Earth to kneel adoring :
Took — while he piped Gounod's
Bit of passionate imploring —
Me for Juliet : who knows ?

No ! as you explain things,
All 's mere repetition,
Practice-pother : of all vain things
Why waste pooh or pish on
Toilsome effort — never
Ending, still beginning —
After what should pay endeavor
— Right-performance ? winning
Weariness from you who,
Ready to admire some
Owl's fresh hooting — Tu-whit, tu-who —
Find stale thrush-songs tiresome.

She. Songs, Spring thought perfection,
Summer criticises :
What in May escaped detection,
August, past surprises,
Notes, and names each blunder.
You, the just-initiate,
Praise to heart's content (what wonder ?)
Tootings I hear vitiate
Romeo's serenading —
I who, times full twenty,
Turned to ice — no ash-tops aiding —
At his *caldamente*.

So, 't was distance altered
Sharps to flats ? The missing
Bar when syncopation faltered
(You thought — paused for kissing !)

Ash-tops too felonious
Intercepted? Rather
Say — they well-nigh made euphonious
Discord, helped to gather
Phrase, by phrase, turn patches
Into simulated
Unity which botching matches, —
Scraps redintegrated.

He. Sweet, are you suggestive
Of an old suspicion
Which has always found me restive
To its admonition
When it ventured whisper
"Fool, the strifes and struggles
Of your trembler — blusher — lisper
Were so many juggles,
Tricks tried — oh, so often! —
Which once more do duty,
Find again a heart to soften,
Soul to snare with beauty."

Birth-blush of the briar-rose,
Mist-bloom of the hedge-sloe,
Some one gains the prize: admire rose
Would he, when noon's wedge — slow —
Sure, has pushed, expanded
Rathe pink to raw redness?
Would he covet sloe when sanded
By road-dust to deadness?
So — restore their value!
Ply a water-sprinkle!
Then guess sloe is fingered, shall you?
Find in rose a wrinkle?

Here what played Aquarius?
Distance — ash-tops aiding,
Reconciled scraps else contrarious,
Brightened stuff fast fading.
Distance — call your shyness:
Was the fair one peevish?
Coyness softened out of slyness.
Was she cunning, thievish,
All-but-proved impostor?
Bear but one day's exile,
Ugly traits were wholly lost or
Screened by fancies flexile —

Ash-tops these, you take me?
Fancies' interference
Changed . . .
But since I sleep, don't wake me!
What if all 's appearance?
Is not outside seeming
Real as substance inside?
Both are facts, so leave me dreaming:
If who loses wins I 'd
Ever lose, — conjecture,
From one phrase trilled deftly,
All the piece. So, end your lecture,
Let who lied be left lie!

"IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST——"

What it was struck the terror into me?
This, Publius: closer! while we wait our turn
I'll tell you. Water's warm (they ring inside)
At the eighth hour, till when no use to bathe.

Here in the vestibule where now we sit,
One scarce stood yesterday, the throng was such
Of loyal gapers, folk all eye and ear
While Lucius Varius Rufus in their midst
Read out that long-planned late-completed piece,
His Panegyric on the Emperor.
"Nobody like him" little Flaccus laughed
"At leading forth an Epos with due pomp!
Only, when godlike Cæsar swells the theme,
How should mere mortals hope to praise aright?
Tell me, thou offshoot of Etruscan kings!"
Whereat Mæcenas smiling sighed assent.

I paid my quadrans, left the Thermæ's roar
Of rapture as the poet asked "What place
Among the godships Jove, for Cæsar's sake,
Would bid its actual occupant vacate
In favor of the new divinity?"
And got the expected answer "Yield thine own!" —
Jove thus dethroned, I somehow wanted air,
And found myself a-pacing street and street,
Letting the sunset, rosy over Rome,
Clear my head dizzy with the hubbub — say
As if thought's dance therein had kicked up dust
By trampling on all else: the world lay prone,

As — poet-propped, in brave hexameters —
Their subject triumphed up from man to God.
Caius Octavius Cæsar the August —
Where was escape from his prepotency ?
I judge I may have passed — how many piles
Of structure dropt like doles from his free hand
To Rome on every side ? Why, right and left,
For temples you 've the Thundering Jupiter,
Avenging Mars, Apollo Palatine :
How count Piazza, Forum — there 's a third
All but completed. You 've the Theatre
Named of Marcellus — all his work, such work ! —
One thought still ending, dominating all —
With warrant Varius sang " Be Cæsar God ! "
By what a hold arrests he Fortune's wheel,
Obtaining and retaining heaven and earth
Through Fortune, if you like, but favor — no !
For the great deeds flashed by me, fast and thick
As stars which storm the sky on autumn nights —
Those conquests ! but peace crowned them, — so, of peace !
Count up his titles only — these, in few —
Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times,
Emperor, nay — the glory topping all —
Hailed Father of his Country, last and best
Of titles, by himself accepted so :
And why not ? See but feats achieved in Rome —
Not to say, Italy — he planted there
Some thirty colonies — but Rome itself
All new-built, " marble now, brick once," he boasts :
This Portico, that Circus. Would you sail ?
He has drained Tiber for you : would you walk ?
He straightened out the long Flaminian Way.
Poor ? Profit by his score of donatives !

Rich — that is, mirthful? Half-a-hundred games
Challenge your choice! There 's Rome — for you and me
Only? The centre of the world besides!
For, look the wide world over, where ends Rome?
To sunrise? There 's Euphrates — all between!
To sunset? Ocean and immensity:
North, — stare till Danube stops you: South, see Nile,
The Desert and the earth-upholding Mount.
Well may the poet-people each with each
Vie in his praise, our company of swans,
Virgil and Horace, singers — in their way —
Nearly as good as Varius, though less famed:
Well may they cry, "No mortal, plainly God!"

Thus to myself myself said, while I walked:
Or would have said, could thought attain to speech,
Clean baffled by enormity of bliss
The while I strove to scale its heights and sound
Its depths — this masterdom o'er all the world
Of one who was but born, — like you, like me,
Like all the world he owns, — of flesh and blood.
But he — how grasp, how gauge his own conceit
Of bliss to me near inconceivable?
Or — since such flight too much makes reel the brain —
Let 's sink — and so take refuge, as it were,
From life's excessive altitude — to life's
Breathable wayside shelter at its base!
If looms thus large this Cæsar to myself
— Of senatorial rank and somebody —
How must he strike the vulgar nameless crowd,
Innumerous swarm that 's nobody at all?
Why, — for an instance, — much as yon gold shape
Crowned, sceptred, on the temple opposite —
Fulgurant Jupiter — must daze the sense

Of — say, yon outcast begging from its step!
What, anti-Cæsar, monarch in the mud,
As he is pinnacled above thy pate?
Ay, beg away! thy lot contrasts full well
With his whose bounty yields thee this support —
Our Holy and Inviolable One,
Cæsar, whose bounty built the fane above!
Dost read my thought? Thy garb, alack, displays
Sore usage truly in each rent and stain —
Faugh! Wash though in Suburra! 'Ware the dogs
Who may not so disdain a meal on thee!
What, stretchest forth a palm to catch my alms?
Aha, why yes: I must appear — who knows? —
I, in my toga, to thy rags and thee —
Quæstor — nay, Ædile, Censor — Pol! perhaps
The very City-Prætor's noble self!
As to me Cæsar, so to thee am I?
Good: nor in vain shall prove thy quest, poor rogue!
Hither — hold palm out — take this quarter-as!

And who did take it? As he raised his head,
(My gesture was a trifle — well, abrupt),
Back fell the broad flap of the peasant's-hat,
The homespun cloak that muffled half his cheek
Dropped somewhat, and I had a glimpse — just one!
One was enough. Whose — whose might be the face?
That unkempt careless hair — brown, yellowish —
Those sparkling eyes beneath their eyebrows' ridge
(Each meets each, and the hawk-nose rules between)
— That was enough, no glimpse was needed more!
And terrifyingly into my mind
Came that quick-hushed report was whispered us,
"They do say, once a year in sordid garb
He plays the mendicant, sits all day long,

Asking and taking alms of who may pass,
And so averting, if submission help,
Fate's envy, the dread chance and change of things
When Fortune — for a word, a look, a naught —
Turns spiteful and — the petted lioness —
Strikes with her sudden paw, and prone falls each
Who patted late her neck superiorly,
Or trifled with those claw-tips velvet-sheathed."
"He's God!" shouts Lucius Varius Rufus: "Man
And worms'-meat any moment!" mutters low
Some Power, admonishing the mortal-born.

Ay, do you mind? There's meaning in the fact
That whoso conquers, triumphs, enters Rome,
Climbing the Capitolian, soaring thus
To glory's summit, — Publius, do you mark —
Ever the same attendant who, behind,
Above the Conqueror's head supports the crown
All-too-demonstrative for human wear,
— One hand's employment — all the while reserves
Its fellow, backward flung, to point how, close
Appended from the car, beneath the foot
Of the up-borne exulting Conqueror,
Frown — half-descried — the instruments of shame,
The malefactor's due. Crown, now — Cross, when?

Who stands secure? Are even Gods so safe?
Jupiter that just now is dominant —
Are not there ancient dismal tales how once
A predecessor reigned ere Saturn came,
And who can say if Jupiter be last?
Was it for nothing the gray Sibyl wrote
"Cæsar Augustus regnant, shall be born
In blind Judæa" — one to master him,
Him and the universe? An old-wife's tale?

Bath-drudge! Here, slave! No cheating! Our turn next.
No loitering, or be sure you taste the lash!
Two strigils, two oil-drippers, each a sponge!

DEVELOPMENT.

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once
"What do you read about?"
"The siege of Troy."
"What is a siege and what is Troy?"
Whereat
He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
— Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom — since she was worth the pains, poor puss —
Towzer and Tray, — our dogs, the Atreidai, — sought
By taking Troy to get possession of
— Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
(My pony in the stable) — forth would prance
And put to flight Hector — our page-boy's self.
This taught me who was who and what was what:
So far I rightly understood the case
At five years old: a huge delight it proved
And still proves — thanks to that instructor sage
My Father, who knew better than turn straight
Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind,
Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,
That — I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege —
My Father came upon our make-believe.
"How would you like to read yourself the tale
Properly told, of which I gave you first
Merely such notion as a boy could bear?
Pope, now, would give you the precise account
Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
You 'll hear — who knows? — from Homer's very mouth.
Learn Greek by all means, read the 'Blind Old Man,
Sweetest of Singers' — *tuphlos* which means 'blind,' *Hedistos* which means 'sweetest.' Time enough!
Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
Until when, take what serves for substitute,
Read Pope, by all means!"
So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale — what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next —
The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn — say, Buttmann to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,
"Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?
There 's Heine, where the big books block the shelf:
Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!"

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue,
And there an end of learning. Had you asked
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,
"Who was it wrote the Iliad?" — what a laugh!

"Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life
Doubtless some facts exist: it's everywhere:
We have not settled, though, his place of birth:
He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:
Seven cities claimed him — Scio, with best right,
Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we have.
Then there's the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,'
That's all — unless they dig 'Margites' up
(I'd like that) nothing more remains to know."

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until — "What's this the Germans say is fact
That Wolf found out first? It's unpleasant work
Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief:
All the same, while we live, we learn, that's sure."
So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena*.
And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like
Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged, — nay, worse, —
No actual Homer, no authentic text,
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long —
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts
And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed
From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.
Assuredly thenceforward — thank my stars! —
However it got there, deprive who could —
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend? — though Wolf — ah, Wolf!
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

But then "No dream's worth waking" — Browning says:
And here's the reason why I tell thus much
I, now mature man, you anticipate,
May blame my Father justifiably
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,
And only by such slow and sure degrees
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.
Why did he ever let me dream at all,
Not bid me taste the story in its strength?
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified
To rightly understand mythology,
Silence at least was in his power to keep:
I might have — somehow — correspondingly —
Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,
My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son,
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.
Could not I have excogitated this
Without believing such men really were?
That is — he might have put into my hand
The "Ethics"? In translation, if you please,
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less —
The "Ethics": 't is a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is gray,
And I can manage the original.
At five years old — how ill had fared its leaves!
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,
Nor crumple, dogsear and deface — boys' way.

REPHAN.[1]

How I lived, ere my human life began
In this world of yours, — like you, made man, —
When my home was the Star of my God Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt
Or deepest despondency keeps you out?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,
Let my circle embrace your worn, your weak,
Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek —

Diseased in the body, sick in soul,
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth, — your whole
Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!

Far from me, native to thy realm,
Who shared its perfections which o'erwhelm
Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,

Let drive the sail, dare unconfined
Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind!

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess:
There, all 's at most — not more, not less:
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

[1] Suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Norwich. — R. B.

No want — whatever should be, is now:
No growth — that 's change, and change comes — how
To royalty born with crown on brow?

Nothing begins — so needs to end:
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend!

I use your language: mine — no word
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,
To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse
Were uncontrastable: bless or curse
What — in that uniform universe?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things
Forth-figure the Star of my God? No springs,
No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear: as to-day, shall be
To-morrow: advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?

All happy: needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise? All serene:
What dark was to banish, what light to screen?

Earth's rose is a bud that 's checked or grows
As beams may encourage or blasts oppose:
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed rose —

Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread
Above and below and around — rose-red:
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I — would prove I lacked
Somewhat : one worse were a jarring fact
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

How did it come to pass there lurked
Somehow a seed of change that worked
Obscure in my heart till perfection irked ? —

Till out of its peace at length grew strife —
Hopes, fears, loves, hates, — obscurely rife, —
My life grown a-tremble to turn your life ?

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar
The prison-gate of Rephan my Star ?

In me did such potency wake a pulse
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent ?
As when the completed rose bursts, rent
By ardors till forth from its orb are sent

New petals that mar — unmake the disc —
Spoil rondure : what in it ran brave risk,
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright, brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and spread
Till, fresh-formed, facetted, floretted,
The flower that slept woke a star instead ?

No mimic of Star Rephan ! How long
I stagnated there where weak and strong,
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but difference
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense
With a want of worth in them all, and thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me — height
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent: by hate taught love.
Oh, gain were indeed to see above
Supremacy ever — to move, remove,

Not reach — aspire yet never attain
To the object aimed at! Scarce in vain, —
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one bliss,
Wring knowledge from ignorance, — just for this —
To add one drop to a love-abyss!

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonize, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said "So wouldst thou strive, not rest?

" Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,
Not rest content with a wealth that 's dearth ?
Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth ! "

REVERIE.

I KNOW there shall dawn a day
— Is it here on homely earth?
Is it yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
That Power comes full in play ?

Is it here, with grass about,
Under befriending trees,
When shy buds venture out,
And the air by mild degrees
Puts winter's death past doubt ?

Is it up amid whirl and roar
Of the elemental flame
Which star-flecks heaven's dark floor,
That, new yet still the same,
Full in play comes Power once more ?

Somewhere, below, above,
Shall a day dawn — this I know —
When Power, which vainly strove
My weakness to o'erthrow,
Shall triumph. I breathe, I move,

I truly am, at last !
For a veil is rent between
Me and the truth which passed
Fitful, half-guessed, half-seen,
Grasped at — not gained, held fast.

I for my race and me
Shall apprehend life's law:
In the legend of man shall see
Writ large what small I saw
In my life's tale: both agree.

As the record from youth to age
Of my own, the single soul —
So the world's wide book: one page
Deciphered explains the whole
Of our common heritage.

How but from near to far
Should knowledge proceed, increase?
Try the clod ere test the star!
Bring our inside strife to peace
Ere we wage, on the outside, war!

So, my annals thus begin:
With body, to life awoke
Soul, the immortal twin
Of body which bore soul's yoke
Since mortal and not akin.

By means of the flesh, grown fit,
Mind, in surview of things,
Now soared, anon alit
To treasure its gatherings
From the ranged expanse — to-wit,

Nature, — earth's, heaven's wide show
Which taught all hope, all fear:
Acquainted with joy and woe,
I could say "Thus much is clear,
Doubt annulled thus much: I know.

"All is effect of cause:
As it would, has willed and done
Power: and my mind's applause
Goes, passing laws each one,
To Omnipotence, lord of laws."

Head praises, but heart refrains
From loving's acknowledgment.
Whole losses outweigh half-gains:
Earth's good is with evil blent:
Good struggles but evil reigns.

Yet since Earth's good proved good —
Incontrovertibly
Worth loving — I understood
How evil — did mind descry
Power's object to end pursued —

Were haply as cloud across
Good's orb, no orb itself:
Mere mind — were it found at loss
Did it play the tricksy elf
And from life's gold purge the dross?

Power is known infinite:
Good struggles to be — at best
Seems — scanned by the human sight,
Tried by the senses' test —
Good palpably: but with right

Therefore to mind's award
Of loving, as power claims praise?
Power — which finds naught too hard,
Fulfilling itself all ways
Unchecked, unchanged: while barred,

Baffled, what good began
Ends evil on every side.
To Power submissive man
Breathes "E'en as Thou art, abide!"
While to good "Late-found, long-sought,

"Would Power to a plenitude
But liberate, but enlarge
Good's strait confine, — renewed
Were ever the heart's discharge
Of loving!" Else doubts intrude.

For you dominate, stars all!
For a sense informs you — brute,
Bird, worm, fly, great and small,
Each with your attribute
Or low or majestical!

Thou earth that embosomest
Offspring of land and sea —
How thy hills first sank to rest,
How thy vales bred herb and tree
Which dizen thy mother-breast —

Do I ask? "Be ignorant
Ever!" the answer clangs:
Whereas if I plead world's want,
Soul's sorrows and body's pangs,
Play the human applicant, —

Is a remedy far to seek?
I question and find response:
I — all men, strong or weak,
Conceive and declare at once
For each want its cure. "Power, speak!

"Stop change, avert decay,
Fix life fast, banish death,
Eclipse from the star bid stay,
Abridge of no moment's breath
One creature! Hence, Night, hail, Day!"

What need to confess again
No problem this to solve
By impotence? Power, once plain
Proved Power, — let on Power devolve
Good's right to co-equal reign!

Past mind's conception — Power!
Do I seek how star, earth, beast,
Bird, worm, fly, gained their dower
For life's use, most and least?
Back from the search I cower.

Do I seek what heals all harm,
Nay, hinders the harm at first,
Saves earth? Speak, Power, the charm!
Keep the life there unamerced
By chance, change, death's alarm!

As promptly as mind conceives,
Let Power in its turn declare
Some law which wrong retrieves,
Abolishes everywhere
What thwarts, what irks, what grieves!

Never to be! and yet
How easy it seems — to sense
Like man's — if somehow met
Power with its match — immense
Love, limitless, unbeset

By hindrance on every side !
  Conjectured, nowise known,
Such may be : could man confide
  Such would match — were Love but shown
Stript of the veils that hide —

Power's self now manifest !
  So reads my record : thine,
O world, how runs it ? Guessed
  Were the purport of that prime line,
Prophetic of all the rest !

"In a beginning God
  Made heaven and earth." Forth flashed
Knowledge : from star to clod
  Man knew things : doubt abashed
Closed its long period.

Knowledge obtained Power praise.
  Had Good been manifest,
Broke out in cloudless blaze,
  Unchequered as unrepressed,
In all things Good at best —

Then praise — all praise, no blame —
  Had hailed the perfection. No !
As Power's display, the same
  Be Good's — praise forth shall flow
Unisonous in acclaim !

Even as the world its life,
  So have I lived my own —
Power seen with Love at strife,
  That sure, this dimly shown,
— Good rare and evil rife.

Whereof the effect be — faith
That, some far day, were found
Ripeness in things now rathe,
Wrong righted, each chain unbound,
Renewal born out of scathe.

Why faith — but to lift the load,
To leaven the lump, where lies
Mind prostrate through knowledge owed
To the loveless Power it tries
To withstand, how vain! In flowed

Ever resistless fact:
No more than the passive clay
Disputes the potter's act,
Could the whelmed mind disobey
Knowledge the cataract.

But, perfect in every part,
Has the potter's moulded shape,
Leap of man's quickened heart,
Throe of his thought's escape,
Stings of his soul which dart

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen
She climbs from the calm and clear,
Through turbidity all between,
From the known to the unknown here,
Heaven's "Shall be," from Earth's "Has been"?

Then life is — to wake not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep
Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

Where, amid what strifes and storms
  May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love — transports, transforms
  Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

I have faith such end shall be:
  From the first, Power was — I knew.
Life has made clear to me
  That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see? When there dawns a day,
  If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
  Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play.

EPILOGUE.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
  When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where — by death, fools think, imprisoned —
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
    — Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
  What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
    — Being — who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast
forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong
would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, — fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

FUGITIVE POEMS AND VERSES FOR OCCASIONS.

SONNET.

1834.

Eyes, calm beside thee (Lady, couldst thou know!)
May turn away thick with fast gathering tears:
I glance not where all gaze: thrilling and low
Their passionate praises reach thee — my cheek wears
Alone no wonder when thou passest by;
Thy tremulous lids, bent and suffused, reply
To the irrepressible homage which doth glow
On every lip but mine: if in thine ears
Their accents linger — and thou dost recall
Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,
Beside each votarist whose lighted brow
Wore worship like an aureole, "O'er them all
My beauty," thou wilt murmur, "did prevail
Save that one only:" — Lady, couldst thou know!

August 17, 1834.

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM.

1856.

I.

"Would a man 'scape the rod?"
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
"See that he turn to God
The day before his death."

"Ay, could a man inquire
When it shall come!" I say,
The Rabbi's eye shoots fire —
"Then let him turn to-day!"

II.

Quoth a young Sadducee:
"Reader of many rolls,
Is it so certain we
Have, as they tell us, souls?"

"Son, there is no reply!"
The Rabbi bit his beard:
"Certain, a soul have *I* —
We may have none," he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple, solemn.

Rome, April 27, 1854.

O LOVE! LOVE!

1879.

I.

O Love! Love, thou that from the eyes diffusest
Yearning, and on the soul sweet grace inducest —
Souls against whom thy hostile march is made —
Never to me be manifest in ire,
Nor, out of time and tune, my peace invade!
Since neither from the fire —
No, nor the stars — is launched a bolt more mighty
Than that of Aphrodité
Hurled from the hands of Love, the boy with Zeus for sire.

II.

Idly, how idly, by the Alpheian river
And in the Pythian shrines of Phœbus, quiver
Blood-offerings from the bull, which Hellas heaps:
While Love we worship not — the Lord of men!
Worship not him, the very key who keeps
Of Aphrodité, when
She closes up her dearest chamber-portals:
— Love, when he comes to mortals,
Wide-wasting, through those deeps of woes beyond the deep!

December 18, 1878.

THE BLIND MAN TO THE MAIDEN.

1879.

The blind man to the maiden said,
"O thou of hearts the truest,
Thy countenance is hid from me;
Let not my question anger thee!
Speak, though in words the fewest.

"Tell me, what kind of eyes are thine?
Dark eyes, or light ones rather?"
"My eyes are a decided brown —
So much, at least, by looking down,
From the brook's glass I gather."

"And is it red — thy little mouth?
That too the blind must care for."
"Ah! I would tell it soon to thee,
Only — none yet has told it me.
I cannot answer therefore.

"But dost thou ask what heart I have —
There hesitate I never.
In thine own breast 't is borne, and so
'T is thine in weal, and thine in woe,
For life, for death — thine ever!"

ALBUM LINES.

COMMENT ON EPILOGUE OF DRAMATIC IDYLS.

1882.

Thus I wrote in London, musing on my betters,
Poets dead and gone; and lo, the critics cried,
"Out on such a boast!" as if I dreamed that fetters
Binding Dante bind up — me! as if true pride
Were not also humble!

So I smiled and sighed
As I oped your book in Venice this bright morning,
Sweet new friend of mine! and felt the clay or sand,
Whatsoe'er my soil be, break — for praise or scorning —
Out in grateful fancies — weeds; but weeds expand
Almost into flowers, held by such a kindly hand.

October 14, 1880.

GOLDONI.

1883.

Goldoni, — good, gay, sunniest of souls, —
Glassing half Venice in that verse of thine, —
What though it just reflect the shade and shine
Of common life, nor render, as it rolls,
Grandeur and gloom? Sufficient for thy shoals
Was Carnival: Parini's depths enshrine
Secrets unsuited to that opaline
Surface of things which laughs along thy scrolls.
There throng the People: how they come and go,
Lisp the soft language, flaunt the bright garb, — see, —
On Piazza, Calle, under Portico
And over Bridge! Dear king of Comedy,
Be honored! thou that didst love Venice so,
Venice, and we who love her, all love thee!

Venice, November 27, 1883.

IMPROMPTU.

1883.

All singers, trust me, have this common vice:
To sing 'mid friends, you 'll have to ask them twice.
If you don't ask them, 't is another thing,
Until the judgment-day be sure they 'll sing.

HELEN'S TOWER.

Ἑλένη ἐπὶ πύργῳ.

1883.

Who hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance
How the Greek Beauty from the Scæan Gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise, at thy advance,
Lady, to whom this Tower is consecrate!
Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
Yet, unlike hers, was bless'd by every glance.

The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange:
A transitory shame of long ago,
It dies into the sand from which it sprang;
But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shall fear no change:
God's self laid stable earth's foundations so,
When all the morning-stars together sang.

April 26, 1870.

RAWDON BROWN.

"Tutti ga i so gusti, e mi go i mii." — *Venetian Saying.*

1884.

Sighed Rawdon Brown: "Yes, I 'm departing, Toni!
I needs must, just this once before I die,
Revisit England: *Anglus* Brown am I,
Although my heart 's Venetian. Yes, old crony —
Venice and London — London's 'Death the bony'
Compared with Life — that 's Venice! What a sky,
A sea, this morning! One last look! Good-by,
Cà Pesaro! No, lion — I 'm a coney
To weep! I 'm dazzled; 't is that sun I view
Rippling the — the — *Cospetto*, Toni! Down
With carpet-bag, and off with valise-straps!
'*Bella Venezia, non ti lascio più!*'"
Nor did Brown ever leave her: well, perhaps
Browning, next week, may find himself quite Brown!

November 28, 1883.

THE NAMES.

1884.

SHAKESPEARE! — to such name's sounding, what succeeds
Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell, —
Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,
Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads
With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,
Would own, "Thou didst create us!" Naught impedes
We voice the other name, man's most of might,
Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
Mutely await their working, leave to sight
All of the issue as — below — above —
Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
Though dread — this finite from that infinite.

March 12, 1884.

THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST.

1884.

"ENTER my palace," if a prince should say —
"Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,
They range from Titian up to Angelo!"
Could we be silent at the rich survey?
A host so kindly, in as great a way
Invites to banquet, substitutes for show
Sound that 's diviner still, and bids us know
Bach like Beethoven; are we thankless, pray?

Thanks, then, to Arthur Chappell, — thanks to him
Whose every guest henceforth not idly vaunts
"Sense has received the utmost Nature grants,
My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
When, night by night, — ah, memory, how it haunts! —
Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
By Halle, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim."

April 5, 1884.

WHY I AM A LIBERAL.

1885.

"WHY?" Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be, —
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men — each in his degree
Also God-guided — bear, and gayly too?

But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

JUBILEE MEMORIAL LINES

FOR A WINDOW IN ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER.

1887.

FIFTY years' flight! wherein should he rejoice
Who hailed their birth, who as they die decays?
This — England echoes his attesting voice;
Wondrous and well — thanks, Ancient Thou of days.

EPITAPH ON LEVI LINCOLN THAXTER.

1889.

THOU, whom these eyes saw never! say friends true
Who say my soul, helped onward by my song,
Though all unwittingly, has helped thee too?
I gave of but the little that I knew:
How were the gift requited, while along
Life's path I pace, couldst thou make weakness strong!
Help me with knowledge — for Life 's Old — Death 's
New!

R. B. to L. L. T., April, 1885.

TO EDWARD FITZGERALD.

1889.

I CHANCED upon a new book yesterday;
I opened it; and where my finger lay,
'Twixt page and uncut page, these words I read, —
Some six or seven, at most, — and learned thereby
That you, Fitzgerald, whom by ear and eye
She never knew, thanked God my wife was dead.
Ay, dead, and were yourself alive, good Fitz,
How to return you thanks would task my wits.
Kicking you seems the common lot of curs,
While more appropriate greeting lends you grace;
Surely, to spit there glorifies your face, —
Spitting, — from lips once sanctified by hers.

July 8, 1889.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

[FOR "LETTERS OF SHELLEY," 1851.]

An opportunity having presented itself for the acquisition of a series of unedited letters by Shelley, all more or less directly supplementary to and illustrative of the collection already published by Mr. Moxon, that gentleman has decided on securing them. They will prove an acceptable addition to a body of correspondence, the value of which, towards a right understanding of its author's purpose and work, may be said to exceed that of any similar contribution exhibiting the worldly relations of a poet whose genius has operated by a different law.

Doubtless we accept gladly the biography of an objective poet, as the phrase now goes; one whose endeavor has been to reproduce things external (whether the phenomena of the scenic universe, or the manifested action of the human heart and brain), with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow-men, assumed capable of receiving and profiting by this reproduction. It has been obtained through the poet's double faculty of seeing external objects more clearly, widely, and deeply than is possible to the average mind, at the same time that he is so acquainted and in sympathy with its narrower comprehension as to be careful to supply it with no other materials than it can combine into an intelligible whole. The auditory of such a poet will include, not only the intelligences which, save for such assistance, would have missed the deeper meaning and enjoyment of the original

objects, but also the spirits of a like endowment with his own, who, by means of his abstract, can forthwith pass to the reality it was made from, and either corroborate their impressions of things known already, or supply themselves with new from whatever shows in the inexhaustible variety of existence may have hitherto escaped their knowledge. Such a poet is properly the ποιητής, the fashioner ; and the thing fashioned, his poetry, will of necessity be substantive, projected from himself and distinct. We are ignorant what the inventor of "Othello" conceived of that fact as he beheld it in completeness, how he accounted for it, under what known law he registered its nature, or to what unknown law he traced its coincidence. We learn only what he intended we should learn by that particular exercise of his power, — the fact itself, — which, with its infinite significances, each of us receives for the first time as a creation, and is hereafter left to deal with, as, in proportion to his own intelligence, he best may. We are ignorant, and would fain be otherwise.

Doubtless, with respect to such a poet, we covet his biography. We desire to look back upon the process of gathering together in a lifetime the materials of the work we behold entire ; of elaborating, perhaps under difficulty and with hindrance, all that is familiar to our admiration in the apparent facility of success. And the inner impulse of this effort and operation, what induced it ? Did a soul's delight in its own extended sphere of vision set it, for the gratification of an insuppressible power, on labor, as other men are set on rest ? Or did a sense of duty or of love lead it to communicate its own sensations to mankind ? Did an irresistible sympathy with men compel it to bring down and suit its own provision of knowledge and beauty to their narrow scope ? Did the personality of such an one stand like an open watch-tower in the midst of the territory it is erected to gaze on, and were the storms and calms, the stars and meteors, its watchman was wont to report of, the habitual

variegation of his every-day life, as they glanced across its open roof or lay reflected on its four-square parapet? Or did some sunken and darkened chamber of imagery witness, in the artificial illumination of every storied compartment we are permitted to contemplate, how rare and precious were the outlooks through here and there an embrasure upon a world beyond, and how blankly would have pressed on the artificer the boundary of his daily life, except for the amorous diligence with which he had rendered permanent by art whatever came to diversify the gloom? Still, fraught with instruction and interest as such details undoubtedly are, we can, if needs be, dispense with them. The man passes, the work remains. The work speaks for itself, as we say: and the biography of the worker is no more necessary to an understanding or enjoyment of it, than is a model or anatomy of some tropical tree, to the right tasting of the fruit we are familiar with on the market-stall, — or a geologist's map and stratification, to the prompt recognition of the hill-top, our landmark of every day.

We turn with stronger needs to the genius of an opposite tendency — the subjective poet of modern classification. He, gifted like the objective poet, with the fuller perception of nature and man, is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth, — an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees, but what God sees, — the *Ideas* of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine Hand, — it is toward these that he struggles. Not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity, he has to do; and he digs where he stands, — preferring to seek them in his own soul as the nearest reflex of that absolute Mind, according to the intuitions of which he desires to perceive and speak. Such a poet does not deal habitually with the

picturesque groupings and tempestuous tossings of the forest-trees, but with their roots and fibres naked to the chalk and stone. He does not paint pictures and hang them on the walls, but rather carries them on the retina of his own eyes : we must look deep into his human eyes, to see those pictures on them. He is rather a seer, accordingly, than a fashioner, and what he produces will be less a work than an effluence. That effluence cannot be easily considered in abstraction from his personality, — being indeed the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated. Therefore, in our approach to the poetry, we necessarily approach the personality of the poet ; in apprehending it we apprehend him, and certainly we cannot love it without loving him. Both for love's and for understanding's sake we desire to know him, and, as readers of his poetry, must be readers of his biography also.

I shall observe, in passing, that it seems not so much from any essential distinction in the faculty of the two poets or in the nature of the objects contemplated by either, as in the more immediate adaptability of these objects to the distinct purpose of each, that the objective poet, in his appeal to the aggregate human mind, chooses to deal with the doings of men (the result of which dealing, in its pure form, when even description, as suggesting a describer, is dispensed with, is what we call dramatic poetry); while the subjective poet, whose study has been himself, appealing through himself to the absolute Divine mind, prefers to dwell upon those external scenic appearances which strike out most abundantly and uninterruptedly his inner light and power, selects that silence of the earth and sea in which he can best hear the beating of his individual heart, and leaves the noisy, complex, yet imperfect exhibitions of nature in the manifold experience of man around him, which serve only to distract and suppress the working of his brain. These opposite tendencies of genius will be more readily descried in their artistic effect than in their moral spring and

cause. Pushed to an extreme and manifested as a deformity, they will be seen plainest of all in the fault of either artist, when, subsidiarily to the human interest of his work, his occasional illustrations from scenic nature are introduced as in the earlier works of the originative painters, — men and women filling the foreground with consummate mastery, while mountain, grove, and rivulet show like an anticipatory revenge on that succeeding race of landscape-painters, whose "figures" disturb the perfection of their earth and sky. It would be idle to inquire, of these two kinds of poetic faculty in operation, which is the higher or even rarer endowment. If the subjective might seem to be the ultimate requirement of every age, the objective, in the strictest state, must still retain its original value. For it is with this world, as starting-point and basis alike, that we shall always have to concern ourselves : the world is not to be learned and thrown aside, but reverted to and relearned. The spiritual comprehension may be infinitely subtilized, but the raw material it operates upon must remain. There may be no end of the poets who communicate to us what they see in an object with reference to their own individuality ; what it was before they saw it, in reference to the aggregate human mind, will be as desirable to know as ever. Nor is there any reason why these two modes of poetic faculty may not issue hereafter from the same poet in successive perfect works, examples of which, according to what are now considered the exigencies of art, we have hitherto possessed in distinct individuals only. A mere running in of the one faculty upon the other is, of course, the ordinary circumstance. Far more rarely it happens that either is found so decidedly prominent and superior as to be pronounced comparatively pure : while of the perfect shield, with the gold and the silver side set up for all comers to challenge, there has yet been no instance. Either faculty in its eminent state is doubtless conceded by Providence as a best gift to men, according to their especial want. There

is a time when the general eye has, so to speak, absorbed its fill of the phenomena around it, whether spiritual or material, and desires rather to learn the exacter significance of what it possesses, than to receive any augmentation of what is possessed. Then is the opportunity for the poet of loftier vision to lift his fellows, with their half-apprehensions, up to his own sphere, by intensifying the import of details and rounding the universal meaning. The influence of such an achievement will not soon die out. A tribe of successors (Homerides) working more or less in the same spirit, dwell on his discoveries and reinforce his doctrine; till, at unawares, the world is found to be subsisting wholly on the shadow of a reality, on sentiments diluted from passions, on the tradition of a fact, the convention of a moral, the straw of last year's harvest. Then is the imperative call for the appearance of another sort of poet, who shall at once replace this intellectual rumination of food swallowed long ago, by a supply of the fresh and living swathe; getting at new substance by breaking up the assumed wholes into parts of independent and unclassed value, careless of the unknown laws for recombining them (it will be the business of yet another poet to suggest those hereafter), prodigal of objects for men's outer and not inner sight; shaping for their uses a new and different creation from the last, which it displaces by the right of life over death, — to endure until, in the inevitable process, its very sufficiency to itself shall require, at length, an exposition of its affinity to something higher, — when the positive yet conflicting facts shall again precipitate themselves under a harmonizing law, and one more degree will be apparent for a poet to climb in that mighty ladder, of which, however cloud-involved and undefined may glimmer the topmost step, the world dares no longer doubt that its gradations ascend.

Such being the two kinds of artists, it is naturally, as I have shown, with the biography of the subjective poet that we have the deeper concern. Apart from his

recorded life altogether, we might fail to determine with satisfactory precision to what class his productions belong, and what amount of praise is assignable to the producer. Certainly, in the fact of any conspicuous achievement of genius, philosophy, no less than sympathetic instinct, warrants our belief in a great moral purpose having mainly inspired even where it does not visibly look out of the same. Greatness in a work suggests an adequate instrumentality ; and none of the lower incitements, however they may avail to initiate or even effect many considerable displays of power, simulating the nobler inspiration to which they are mistakenly referred, have been found able, under the ordinary conditions of humanity, to task themselves to the end of so exacting a performance as a poet's complete work. As soon will the galvanism, that provokes to violent action the muscles of a corpse, induce it to cross the chamber steadily : sooner. The love of displaying power for the display's sake, the love of riches, of distinction, of notoriety, — the desire of a triumph over rivals, and the vanity in the applause of friends, — each and all of such whetted appetites grow intenser by exercise, and increasingly sagacious as to the best and readiest means of self-appeasement : while for any of their ends, whether the money or the pointed finger of the crowd, or the flattery and hate to heart's content, there are cheaper prices to pay, they will all find soon enough, than the bestowment of a life upon a labor hard, slow, and not sure. Also, assuming the proper moral aim to have produced a work, there are many and various states of an aim : it may be more intense than clear-sighted, or too easily satisfied with a lower field of activity than a steadier aspiration would reach. All the bad poetry in the world (accounted poetry, that is, by its affinities) will be found to result from some one of the infinite degrees of discrepancy between the attributes of the poet's soul, occasioning a want of correspondency between his work and the verities of nature, — issuing in poetry, false

under whatever form, which shows a thing, not as it is to mankind generally, nor as it is to the particular describer, but as it is supposed to be for some unreal neutral mood, midway between both and of value to neither, and living its brief minute simply through the indolence of whoever accepts it, or his incapacity to denounce a cheat. Although of such depths of failure there can be no question here, we must in every case betake ourselves to the review of a poet's life ere we determine some of the nicer questions concerning his poetry, — more especially if the performance we seek to estimate aright has been obstructed and cut short of completion by circumstances, — a disastrous youth or a premature death. We may learn from the biography whether his spirit invariably saw and spoke from the last height to which it had attained. An absolute vision is not for this world, but we are permitted a continual approximation to it, every degree of which in the individual, provided it exceed the attainment of the masses, must procure him a clear advantage. Did the poet ever attain to a higher platform than where he rested and exhibited a result? Did he know more than he spoke of?

I concede, however, in respect to the subject of our study as well as some few other illustrious examples, that the unmistakable quality of the verse would be evidence enough, under usual circumstances, not only of the kind and degree of the intellectual but of the moral constitution of Shelley: the whole personality of the poet shining forward from the poems, without much need of going further to seek it. The "Remains" — produced within a period of ten years, and at a season of life when other men of at all comparable genius have hardly done more than prepare the eye for future sight and the tongue for speech — present us with the complete enginery of a poet, as signal in the excellence of its several adaptitudes as transcendent in the combination of effects, — examples, in fact, of the whole poet's function of beholding with an understanding keenness the universe, nature and man, in

their actual state of perfection in imperfection, — of the whole poet's virtue of being untempted by the manifold partial developments of beauty and good on every side, into leaving them the ultimates he found them, — induced by the facility of the gratification of his own sense of those qualities, or by the pleasure of acquiescence in the shortcomings of his predecessors in art, and the pain of disturbing their conventionalisms, — the whole poet's virtue, I repeat, of looking higher than any manifestation yet made of both beauty and good, in order to suggest from the utmost actual realization of the one a corresponding capability in the other, and out of the calm, purity, and energy of nature to reconstitute and store up, for the forthcoming stage of man's being, a gift in repayment of that former gift, in which man's own thought and passion had been lavished by the poet on the else-incompleted magnificence of the sunrise, the else-uninterpreted mystery of the lake, — so drawing out, lifting up, and assimilating this ideal of a future man, thus descried as possible, to the present reality of the poet's soul already arrived at the higher state of development, and still aspirant to elevate and extend itself in conformity with its still-improving perceptions of, no longer the eventual Human, but the actual Divine. In conjunction with which noble and rare powers, came the subordinate power of delivering these attained results to the world in an embodiment of verse more closely answering to and indicative of the process of the informing spirit, (failing, as it occasionally does, in art, only to succeed in highest art), — with a diction more adequate to the task in its natural and acquired richness, its material color and spiritual transparency, — the whole being moved by and suffused with a music at once of the soul and the sense, expressive both of an external might of sincere passion and an internal fitness and consonancy, — than can be attributed to any other writer whose record is among us. Such was the spheric poetical faculty of Shelley, as its own self-sufficing central light,

radiating equally through immaturity and accomplishment, through many fragments and occasional completion, reveals it to a competent judgment.

But the acceptance of this truth by the public has been retarded by certain objections which cast us back on the evidence of biography, even with Shelley's poetry in our hands. Except for the particular character of these objections, indeed, the non-appreciation of his contemporaries would simply class, now that it is over, with a series of experiences which have necessarily happened and needlessly been wondered at, ever since the world began, and concerning which any present anger may well be moderated, no less in justice to our forerunners than in policy to ourselves. For the misapprehensiveness of his age is exactly what a poet is sent to remedy ; and the interval between his operation and the generally perceptible effect of it is no greater, less indeed, than in many other departments of the great human effort. The "E pur si muove" of the astronomer was as bitter a word as any uttered before or since by a poet over his rejected living work, in that depth of conviction which is so like despair.

But in this respect was the experience of Shelley peculiarly unfortunate — that the disbelief in him as a man even preceded the disbelief in him as a writer ; the misconstruction of his moral nature preparing the way for the misappreciation of his intellectual labors. There existed from the beginning, — simultaneous with, indeed anterior to his earliest noticeable works, and not brought forward to counteract any impression they had succeeded in making, — certain charges against his private character and life, which, if substantiated to their whole breadth, would materially disturb, I do not attempt to deny, our reception and enjoyment of his works, however wonderful the artistic qualities of these. For we are not sufficiently supplied with instances of genius of his order to be able to pronounce certainly how many of its constituent parts have been tasked and strained to the production

of a given lie, and how high and pure a mood of the creative mind may be dramatically simulated as the poet's habitual and exclusive one. The doubts, therefore, arising from such a question, required to be set at rest, as they were effectually, by those early authentic notices of Shelley's career and the corroborative accompaniment of his letters, in which not only the main tenor and principal result of his life, but the purity and beauty of many of the processes which had conduced to them, were made apparent enough for the general reader's purpose, — whoever lightly condemned Shelley first, on the evidence of reviews and gossip, as lightly acquitting him now, on that of memoirs and correspondence. Still, it is advisable to lose no opportunity of strengthening and completing the chain of biographical testimony; much more, of course, for the sake of the poet's original lovers, whose volunteered sacrifice of particular principle in favor of absorbing sympathy we might desire to dispense with, than for the sake of his foolish haters, who have long since diverted upon other objects their obtuseness or malignancy. A full life of Shelley should be written at once, while the materials for it continue in reach; not to minister to the curiosity of the public, but to obliterate the last stain of that false life which was forced on the public's attention before it had any curiosity on the matter, — a biography composed in harmony with the present general disposition to have faith in him, yet not shrinking from a candid statement of all ambiguous passages, through a reasonable confidence that the most doubtful of them will be found consistent with a belief in the eventual perfection of his character, according to the poor limits of our humanity. Nor will men persist in confounding, any more than God confounds, with genuine infidelity and an atheism of the heart those passionate impatient struggles of a boy towards distant truth and love, made in the dark, and ended by one sweep of the natural seas before the full moral sunrise could shine out on him. Crude convictions of boyhood, conveyed in imperfect and inapt forms of speech, — for

such things all boys have been pardoned. There are growing-pains, accompanied by temporary distortion, of the soul also. And it would be hard indeed upon this young Titan of genius, murmuring in divine music his human ignorances, through his very thirst for knowledge, and his rebellion, in mere aspiration to law, if the melody itself substantiated the error, and the tragic cutting short of life perpetuated into sins such faults as, under happier circumstances, would have been left behind by the consent of the most arrogant moralist, forgotten on the lowest steps of youth.

The responsibility of presenting to the public a biography of Shelley does not, however, lie with me : I have only to make it a little easier by arranging these few supplementary letters, with a recognition of the value of the whole collection. This value I take to consist in a most truthful conformity of the Correspondence, in its limited degree, with the moral and intellectual character of the writer as displayed in the highest manifestations of his genius. Letters and poems are obviously an act of the same mind, produced by the same law, only differing in the application to the individual or collective understanding. Letters and poems may be used indifferently as the basement of our opinion upon the writer's character ; the finished expression of a sentiment in the poems giving light and significance to the rudiments of the same in the letters, and these again, in their incipiency and unripeness, authenticating the exalted mood and reattaching it to the personality of the writer. The musician speaks on the note he sings with ; there is no change in the scale as he diminishes the volume into familiar intercourse. There is nothing of that jarring between the man and the author, which has been found so amusing or so melancholy ; no dropping of the tragic mask as the crowd melts away ; no mean discovery of the real motives of a life's achievement, often, in other lives, laid bare as pitifully as when, at the close of a holiday, we catch sight of the internal lead-pipes and wood-valves to which,

and not to the ostensible conch and dominant Triton of the fountain, we have owed our admired waterwork. No breaking out, in household privacy, of hatred, anger, and scorn, incongruous with the higher mood, and suppressed artistically in the book ; no brutal return to self-delighting, when the audience of philanthropic schemes is out of hearing : no indecent stripping off the grander feeling and rule of life as too costly and cumbrous for every-day wear. Whatever Shelley was, he was with an admirable sincerity. It was not always truth that he thought and spoke ; but in the purity of truth he spoke and thought always. Everywhere is apparent his belief in the existence of Good, to which Evil is an accident ; his faithful holding by what he assumed to be tne former going everywhere in company with the tenderest pity for those acting or suffering on the opposite hypothesis. For he was tender, though tenderness is not always the characteristic of very sincere natures ; he was eminently both tender and sincere. And not only do the same affection and yearning after the well-being of his kind appear in the letters as in the poems, but they express themselves by the same theories and plans, however crude and unsound. There is no reservation of a subtler, less costly, more serviceable remedy for his own ill, than he has proposed for the general one ; nor does he ever contemplate an object on his own account, from a less elevation than he uses in exhibiting it to the world. How shall we help believing Shelley to have been, in his ultimate attainment, the splendid spirit of his own best poetry, when we find even his carnal speech to agree faithfully, at faintest as at strongest, with the tone and rhythm of his most oracular utterances ?

For the rest, these new letters are not offered as presenting any new feature of the poet's character. Regarded in themselves, and as the substantive productions of a man, their importance would be slight. But they possess interest beyond their limits, in confirming the evidence just dwelt on, of the poetical mood of Shelley being only

the intensification of his habitual mood; the same tongue only speaking, for want of the special excitement to sing. The very first letter, as one instance for all, strikes the key-note of the predominating sentiment of Shelley throughout his whole life — his sympathy with the oppressed. And when we see him at so early an age casting out, under the influence of such a sympathy, letters and pamphlets on every side, we accept it as the simple exemplification of the sincerity with which, at the close of his life, he spoke of himself, as —

> "One whose heart a stranger's tear might wear
> As water-drops the sandy fountain stone;
> Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
> For woes which others hear not, and could see
> The absent with the glass of phantasy,
> And near the poor and trampled sit and weep,
> Following the captive to his dungeon deep —
> One who was as a nerve o'er which do creep
> The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth."

Such sympathy with his kind was evidently developed in him to an extraordinary and even morbid degree, at a period when the general intellectual powers it was impatient to put in motion were immature or deficient.

I conjecture, from a review of the various publications of Shelley's youth, that one of the causes of his failure at the outset was the peculiar *practicalness* of his mind, which was not without a determinate effect on his progress in theorizing. An ordinary youth, who turns his attention to similar subjects, discovers falsities, incongruities, and various points for amendment, and, in the natural advance of the purely critical spirit unchecked by considerations of remedy, keeps up before his young eyes so many instances of the same error and wrong, that he finds himself unawares arrived at the startling conclusion, that all must be changed — or nothing: in the face of which plainly impossible achievement, he is apt (looking perhaps a little more serious by the time he touches at the decisive issue) to feel, either carelessly or

considerately, that his own attempting a single piece of service would be worse than useless even, and to refer the whole task to another age and person — safe in proportion to his incapacity. Wanting words to speak, he has never made a fool of himself by speaking. But, in Shelley's case, the early fervor and power to *see* was accompanied by as precocious a fertility to *contrive:* he endeavored to realize as he went on idealizing; every wrong had simultaneously its remedy, and, out of the strength of his hatred for the former, he took the strength of his confidence in the latter — till suddenly he stood pledged to the defence of a set of miserable little expedients, just as if they represented great principles, and to an attack upon various great principles, really so, without leaving himself time to examine whether, because they were antagonistical to the remedy he had suggested, they must therefore be identical or even essentially connected with the wrong he sought to cure, — playing with blind passion into the hands of his enemies, and dashing at whatever red cloak was held forth to him, as the cause of the fireball he had last been stung with — mistaking Churchdom for Christianity, and for marriage, "the sale of love" and the law of sexual oppression.

Gradually, however, he was leaving behind him this low practical dexterity, unable to keep up with his widening intellectual perception; and, in exact proportion as he did so, his true power strengthened and proved itself. Gradually he was raised above the contemplation of spots and the attempt at effacing them, to the great Abstract Light, and, through the discrepancy of the creation, to the sufficiency of the First Cause. Gradually he was learning that the best way of removing abuses is to stand fast by truth. Truth is one, as they are manifold; and innumerable negative effects are produced by the upholding of one positive principle. I shall say what I think, — had Shelley lived he would have finally ranged himself with the Christians; his very instinct for helping the weaker side (if numbers make strength), his very "hate

of hate," which at first mistranslated itself into delirious Queen Mab notes and the like, would have got clear-sighted by exercise. The preliminary step to following Christ, is the leaving the dead to bury their dead — not clamoring on His doctrine for an especial solution of difficulties which are referable to the general problem of the universe. Already he had attained to a profession of "a worship to the Spirit of good within, which requires (before it sends that inspiration forth, which impresses its likeness upon all it creates) devoted and disinterested homage," *as Coleridge says*, — and Paul likewise. And we find in one of his last exquisite fragments, avowedly a record of one of his own mornings and its experience, as it dawned on him at his soul and body's best in his boat on the Serchio, — that as surely as

> "The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
> And the thin white moon lay withering there —
> Day had kindled the dewy woods,
> And the rocks above, and the stream below,
> And the vapors in their multitudes,
> And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow —
> Day had awakened all things that be;"

just so surely, he tells us (stepping forward from this delicious dance-music, choragus-like, into the grander measure befitting the final enunciation), —

> "All rose to do the task He set to each,
> Who shaped us to His ends and not our own;
> The million rose to learn, and One to teach
> What none yet ever knew or can be known."

No more difference than this, from David's pregnant conclusion so long ago!

Meantime, as I call Shelley a moral man, because he was true, simple-hearted, and brave, and because what he acted corresponded to what he knew, so I call him a man of religious mind, because every audacious negative cast up by him against the Divine was interpenetrated with a mood of reverence and adoration, — and because

I find him everywhere taking for granted some of the capital dogmas of Christianity, while most vehemently denying their historical basement. There is such a thing as an efficacious knowledge of and belief in the politics of Junius, or the poetry of Rowley, though a man should at the same time dispute the title of Chatterton to the one, and consider the author of the other, as Byron wittily did, "really, truly, nobody at all." [1] There is even such a thing, we come to learn wonderingly in these very letters, as a profound sensibility and adaptitude for art, while the science of the percipient is so little advanced as to admit of his stronger admiration for Guido (and Carlo Dolce!) than for Michael Angelo. A Divine Being has Himself said, that "a word against the Son of man shall be forgiven to a man," while "a word against the Spirit of God" (implying a general deliberate preference of perceived evil to perceived good) "shall not be forgiven to a man." Also, in religion, one earnest and unextorted assertion of belief should outweigh, as a matter of testimony, many assertions of unbelief. The fact that there is a gold-region is established by the finding of one lump, though you miss the vein never so often.

He died before his youth ended. In taking the measure of him as a man, he must be considered on the whole and at his ultimate spiritual stature, and not to be judged of at the immaturity and by the mistakes of ten years before: that, indeed, would be to judge of the author of "Julian and Maddalo" by "Zastrozzi." Let the whole truth be told of his worst mistake. I believe, for my own part, that if anything could now shame or

[1] Or, to take our illustrations from the writings of Shelley himself, there is such a thing as admirably appreciating a work by Andrea Verocchio, — and fancifully characterizing the Pisan Torre Guelfa by the Ponte a Mare, black against the sunsets, — and consummately painting the islet of San Clemente with its penitentiary for rebellious priests, to the west between Venice and the Lido — while you believe the first to be a fragment of an antique sarcophagus — the second, Ugolino's Tower of Famine (the vestiges of which should be sought for in the Piazza de' Cavalieri) — and the third (as I convinced myself last summer at Venice), San Servolo with its mad-house — which, far from being "windowless," is as full of windows as a barrack.

grieve Shelley, it would be an attempt to vindicate him at the expense of another.

In forming a judgment, I would, however, press on the reader the simple justice of considering tenderly his constitution of body as well as mind, and how unfavorable it was to the steady symmetries of conventional life; the body, in the torture of incurable disease, refusing to give repose to the bewildered soul, tossing in its hot fever of the fancy, — and the laudanum-bottle making but a perilous and pitiful truce between these two. He was constantly subject to "that state of mind" (I quote his own note to "Hellas") "in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensation, through the confusion of thought with the objects of thought, and excess of passion animating the creations of the imagination:" in other words, he was liable to remarkable delusions and hallucinations. The nocturnal attack in Wales, for instance, was assuredly a delusion; and I venture to express my own conviction, derived from a little attention to the circumstances of either story, that the idea of the enamored lady following him to Naples, and of the "man in the cloak" who struck him at the Pisan post-office, were equally illusory, — the mere projection, in fact, from himself, of the image of his own love and hate.

> "To thirst and find no fill — to wail and wander
> With short unsteady steps — to pause and ponder —
> To feel the blood run through the veins and tingle
> When busy thought and blind sensation mingle, —
> To nurse the image of *unfelt caresses*
> Till dim imagination just possesses
> The half-created shadow" —

of unfelt caresses, — and of unfelt blows as well: to such conditions was his genius subject. It was not at Rome only (where he heard a mystic voice exclaiming, "Cenci, Cenci," in reference to the tragic theme which occupied him at the time), — it was not at Rome only that he mistook the cry of "old rags." The habit of somnambulism is said to have extended to the very last days of his life.

Let me conclude with a thought of Shelley as a poet. In the hierarchy of creative minds, it is the presence of the highest faculty that gives first rank, in virtue of its kind, not degree; no pretension of a lower nature, whatever the completeness of development or variety of effect, impeding the precedency of the rarer endowment though only in the germ. The contrary is sometimes maintained; it is attempted to make the lower gifts (which are potentially included in the higher faculty) of independent value, and equal to some exercise of the special function. For instance, should not a poet possess common sense? Then the possession of abundant common sense implies a step towards becoming a poet. Yes; such a step as the lapidary's, when, strong in the fact of carbon entering largely into the composition of the diamond, he heaps up a sack of charcoal in order to compete with the Koh-i-noor. I pass at once, therefore, from Shelley's minor excellences to his noblest and predominating characteristic.

This I call his simultaneous perception of Power and Love in the absolute, and of Beauty and Good in the concrete, while he throws, from his poet's station between both, swifter, subtler, and more numerous films for the connection of each with each, than have been thrown by any modern artificer of whom I have knowledge; proving how, as he says, —

> "The spirit of the worm within the sod
> In love and worship blends itself with God."

I would rather consider Shelley's poetry as a sublime fragmentary essay towards a presentment of the correspondency of the universe to Deity, of the natural to the spiritual, and of the actual to the ideal, than I would isolate and separately appraise the worth of many detachable portions which might be acknowledged as utterly perfect in a lower moral point of view, under the mere conditions of art. It would be easy to take my stand on successful instances of objectivity in Shelley: there is the

unrivalled "Cenci;" there is the "Julian and Maddalo" too; there is the magnificent "Ode to Naples:" why not regard, it may be said, the less organized matter as the radiant elemental foam and solution, out of which would have been evolved, eventually, creations as perfect even as those? But I prefer to look for the highest attainment, not simply the high, — and, seeing it, I hold by it. There is surely enough of the work "Shelley" to be known enduringly among men, and, I believe, to be accepted of God, as human work may; and around the imperfect proportions of such, the most elaborated productions of ordinary art must arrange themselves as inferior illustrations.

It is because I have long held these opinions in assurance and gratitude, that I catch at the opportunity offered to me of expressing them here; knowing that the alacrity to fulfil an humble office conveys more love than the acceptance of the honor of a higher one, and that better, therefore, than the signal service it was the dream of my boyhood to render to his fame and memory, may be the saying of a few inadequate words upon these scarcely more important supplementary letters of SHELLEY.

PARIS, *December 4th*, 1851.

INTRODUCTION.

[TO "THE DIVINE ORDER," BY THOMAS JONES, 1884.]

I AM informed that a collection of sermons by the late Rev. Thomas Jones, of Bedford Chapel, has been made, and will be shortly published. Among them may probably appear some of those I listened to a long while since, and I shall have curiosity as well as interest in ascertaining how far the surviving speech — whether preserved by a reporter or printed from the author's own notes — will correspond in effect with the original extempore utterance, of which I retain a sufficient memory. I should think it impossible that such an outpour of impetuous eloquence could lie quietly condensed by the limitations of the ordinarily accepted sermon — its regular beginning, middle, and end. Indeed, as often as not, when the scheme of the projected discourse had been stated with due precision, its merely introductory portion would in delivery not merely grow alive but expand with ever fresh and fresh accretions of fact and fancy, old analogy and modern instance, till the orator (as those gone-by divines have it) *sermocinando ultra clepsydram*, "would exceed his hour-glass," to the dissatisfaction of nobody. Yet I was told at the time that this manager of fluent English — copious, varied, wanting in neither imagery nor colour — had acquired when adult such mastery over an absolutely foreign language. Some of the incitements to discursiveness might arise from a facile promptitude in finding illustrations of whatever was the subject under treatment in occurrences of the

actual day and hour, political or social. I remember that Thackeray's funeral, with circumstances attending it that had been mentioned in a weekly paper issued the evening before, was made to exemplify some point of doctrine which it very profitably involved and absorbed altogether. This much is said in order to prepare myself rather than the reader for a possible disappointment; the matter, the graver substratum of the sermon, will undoubtedly remain for judgment, and may fearlessly accept it; but the bright and glancing surface manner, the thorough earnestness, a sensibility quivering through that rich and flexible voice, and an illumination of intellect in every expressive feature — these must needs be taken on trust; and I should be hardly faithful to mine if I hesitated so far to bear witness. But it was not eloquence alone which attracted you to Bedford Chapel; the liberal humanity of the religionist to be heard there acknowledged an advocate wherever his quick sense could detect one, however unconscious that his sayings might be pressed into the service; and Tennyson, with Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, and Carlyle, would find themselves claimed as the most energetic of helpers when they least expected it. Indeed, it was a fancy of mine that, in certain respects and under certain moods, a younger Carlyle might, sharing the same convictions, have spoken so, even have looked so; but the clear-cut Celtic features, the lips compressed as with the retention of a discovered prize in thought or feeling, the triumph of the eyes, brimful of conviction and confidence — these, no less than the fervency of faith and hope, were the orator's own. I had scarcely the honour of acquaintance with this distinguished person. He sent some one to invite me, a stranger, into the vestry after service, and I conversed a little with the preacher, still suffused by the thought and passion of the last hour: and afterwards I was occasionally admitted to the same privilege. I do not wonder he was short-lived. He subsequently paid me, at my own house, a visit, one only. And now there will remain of this excellence — sermons,

these few lines of "glittering gold." That true "gold" will be discovered there by the worthy assayer I do not doubt; that it glittered once I seem bound to gratefully say, should there be any care for the impressions received more than fifteen years ago.

ROBERT BROWNING.

NOTES.

Ferishtah's Fancies.

Ferishtah's Fancies. Prologue. In this, the poet gives an idea of the poems to follow by drawing a comparison between them and a mess of ortolans as they prepare them in Italy with toast and a sage leaf to curb the lusciousness, so he has interspersed lyrical expressions of a thought with poems discussing the moral aspect of the same or a similar thought. The toast stands for the story itself, or "sense;" the sage-leaf for the moral of the story, or "sight;" and the ortolan for the emotional expression of the idea, or "song."

The Eagle. Ferishtah, not yet having attained Dervish-hood, one day sees an eagle feed some young ravens, the mother bird being dead. He thinks to profit by the lesson, and returns home to sit and muse and do no work for meat and drink, until he grows faint, falls asleep, and in a dream is admonished by God to the effect that man's part is not to play the weakling, but to work, eat, and help others who are in need. He awakes, and at once puts the lesson of the dream into practice, and goes forth to help those who starve in soul.

The Lyric expresses the same idea from the point of view of love; namely, that two who love each other should not selfishly isolate themselves, but should go among the world of men, and through their love for each other shed love abroad in the world.

This story is a versification of one of the "Fables of Pilpay" (Bidpai), given in the Chandos Classics, as follows: —

"A certain dervish used to relate that, in his youth, once passing through a wood and admiring the works of the great Author of Nature, he spied a falcon that held a piece of flesh in his beak; and hovering about a tree, tore the flesh into bits, and gave it to a young raven that lay bald and featherless in its nest. The dervish, admiring the bounty of Providence, in a rapture of admiration cried out, 'Behold, this poor bird, that is not able to seek out sustenance for himself, is not, however, forsaken of its Creator, who spreads the whole world like a table, where all creatures have their food ready provided for them! He extends His liberality so far that the serpent finds wherewith to live upon the mountain of Gahen. Why, then, am I so greedy? wherefore do I run to the ends of the earth, and plough up the ocean for bread? Is it not better that I should henceforward confine myself in repose to some little corner, and abandon myself to fortune?' Upon this he retired to his cell, where, without putting himself to any further trouble for anything in the world, he remained three days and three nights without victuals. At last, 'Servant of mine,' said the Creator to him in a dream, 'know thou that all things in this world have their causes; and though my providence can never be limited, my wisdom requires that men shall make use of the means that I have ordained them. If thou wouldst imitate any one of the birds thou hast seen to my glory, use the talents I have given thee, and imitate the falcon that feeds the raven, and not the raven that lies a sluggard in his nest, and expects his food from another.' This example shows us that we are not to lead idle and lazy lives upon the pretence of depending upon Providence."

1. *Dervish:* a Mohammedan religious mendicant. Some live in monasteries, and others wander about the country. Their means of livelihood is begging from door to door; hence the name "Dervish," which is said to mean "the sill of the door."

5. *Ferishtah:* there was a celebrated Persian his-

torian of this name (born about 1570). He has, of course, no connection with the poem. As pointed out by George Willis Cooke, Ferishtah resembles Bidpai the philosopher as he appears in the "Fables." "His character as a sage and his manner of teaching are quite similar."

35. *Ispahan:* a celebrated city of Persia, at the height of its glory under Shah Abbas in the seventeenth century. It was then the capital of Irak.

The Melon-Seller. Ferishtah, going his rounds in Ispahan, discovers a poor melon-seller to have been at one time the Shah's prime minister, and asks him if he does not curse God for having granted him twelve years' bliss only to bring him so low at the end. In his reply the melon-seller implies that it is greater justice that the unworthy one should suffer at God's hands than that he should receive only good.

The Lyric represents the mood of a lover who would not blot out any unkind word of the beloved one to him, since, if he did that, he would feel that he must render back the store of gifts which should he get only what he deserved would not in justice be his.

34. *Nishapur:* a small city in the province of Khorassan. — *Elburz . . . where they dig turquoise:* Elburz is a mountain-peak in a range of the same name. The finest kinds of turquoise come from Persia.

41. "*Shall we receive good at the hand of God,*" etc.: see Job i. 10. This is a translation of the Hebrew phrase preceding, taken from "a certain Jew," which is, of course, Job.

Shah Abbas. Ferishtah discusses with a disciple the historical grounds of belief. The record of Lord Ali's life is beautiful, but is it true, except in the sense that there is truth in all beauty? A parallel is drawn with a legend told of Shah Abbas, which the disciple accuses Ferishtah of believing upon the evidence of one cupbearer. Ferishtah retorts that he merely considers the story as a useful registry that Abbas once reigned some-

where, somewhen, but even the tracing back to Abbas of the ancestry of Yakub would not make him believe the impossible elements of the story. Both are agreed that they do not accept the tale to an extent which warrants their expressing belief in it. Then why is Ferishtah overcome with emotion at the story of Ali's life, which is "un-evidenced" according to his own showing? He might as well suppose that his *emotion* over it will help him at the day of judgment, as that emotion over a bit of moving fiction will procure favor. Ferishtah replies to this argument by a parable which goes to prove that it is better to distrust and love as a son who believes his father will never return, yet hates to think of enjoying his inheritance, than to believe without love, as the son who feels sure his father will return, and sighs to think he will no longer enjoy his inheritance.

The Lyric expresses the thought that all doubts as to each other existing between lovers will never separate them as long as love is light and trust is guide.

Shah Abbas: called "The Great," was a distinguished Persian ruler, who came to the throne in 1585. He was very successful in his wars. He defeated the united armies of the Turks and Tartars in 1618, and at his death his kingdom extended from the Tigris to the Indus. The story told of him here is imaginary.

6. *Lord Ali:* a cousin of Mohammed was named Ali. He was the first one to recognize Mohammed's divine mission; he married his daughter Fatima.

47. *Zal:* one of the characters in the Persian poem "Shah Nameh."

81. *Tahmasp:* the name of a character in the "Shah Nameh;" but the story here referred to is an invention of the poet.

84. *Zurah:* the Persian name for Venus.

99. *Ishak son of Absal:* imaginary personage.

102. *Yezdt:* a fortified city of Persia, in the province of Irak.

107. *Mubid:* a Persian magician.

The Family. In this, the problem of setting man's will against God's by prayer instead of accepting as best whatever God sends, is discussed. Ferishtah illustrates by a tale showing the attitude of a father and three sons toward the decision of the leech that the only cure for the mother's snake-bitten limb is to amputate it. The husband in saying, "Thou knowest, be it so," shows a "ready acquiescence — aptitude angelic, understanding swift and sure;" the oldest son in beseeching the leech to find some gentler way if possible — "a wise humanity, slow to conceive but duteous to adopt;" the second son in demanding that the leech must save the limb some other way, — "humanity, wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but kind;" the third son in accepting the leech's decision without question, even anxious to hasten the operation, — one who "apes wisdom all beyond his years, thinks to discard humanity itself," so misses heaven, loses earth, and drops to hell. The lesson to be learned is that it is better to be human and have a loving heart which would fain set aside such decisions of God as seem evil than to be so sure you know the ways of God as to accept all his rulings in a cold-blooded, heartless way.

The Lyric. A lover declares that all of heaven he can grasp or needs is contained in his human love. Perfection he could not appreciate unless he were made an angel of.

4. *Gudarz:* the name of a character in the "Shah Nameh," used here fictitiously.

23. *Shiraz:* a city of Persia, formerly capital of the empire, and the home of the poets Saadi and Hafiz.

51. *Hakim:* or Hakeem, the name for the Mohammedan Messiah.

The Sun discusses the subject of the Incarnation. Ferishtah answers the impatient scoffer who cannot comprehend the mingling of the divine with the human nature with an argument in which he uses the sun as the symbol of divinity, the author of all light and life, and hence inspiring love and praise. He traces love from

its primitive forms such as pleasure in the taste of a palatable fig, when thanks to the gardener for his gift go forth, up to a prime source of all good which is loved and praised at height. Everywhere in the ascent, love goes forth to some one who is capable of responding to love; then it must be that the prime source of all good is capable of responding to love, hence the divine nature must partake of the human. Yet if it partake of human qualities it must fall short of perfection, so there is the choice between worshipping a being incapable of response to human emotions or one subject to human imperfection. Ferishtah decides that for our human needs it is better for us to think of the divine nature as responsive to human love, though man may be unable actually to conceive the whole nature of divinity. Love is the highest attribute of the human soul, and man must give forth love as flowers give forth scent, though the sun lacks nose to feed on what himself made grateful. But what bearing has all this on the story of the Incarnation? It does not prove its literal truth, but it expresses an ideal of infinite love which is of inestimable value to man as giving form to his noblest aspirations, and this ideal, if not absolutely true, stands as a symbol of the infinite reality. Any one, therefore, who is unable to appreciate the beauty of such an ideal is to be pitied.

The Lyric. The thought given in this by means of the simile of the spark struck from the flint, is that ideals grow out of the human heart and mind, but once let them take definite form and their human origin is forgotten. They appear then to be revelations direct from heaven, and therefore perfect.

18. "*During our ignorance . . . folk esteemed as God yon orb*": the ancient Persians were fire-worshippers, and regarded the sun as the source of fire. A description of the inauguration of the worship of fire by Husheng, the second king in the Peshdadian dynasty, is given in Firdausi's "Shah Nameh." The account is especially interesting as suggesting the source of the symbolism of the lyric accompanying this poem, —

"Passing, one day, towards the mountain's side,
Attended by his train, surprised he saw
Something in aspect terrible, — its eyes
Fountains of blood; its dreadful mouth sent forth
Volumes of smoke that darkened all the air.
Fixing his gaze upon that hideous form,
He seized a stone, and with prodigious force
Hurling it, chanced to strike a jutting rock,
Whence sparks arose, and presently a fire
O'erspread the plain, in which the monster perished.
Thus Husheng found the element which shed
Light through the world. The monarch prostrate bowed,
Praising the great Creator for the good
Bestowed on man, and, pious, then he said,
This is the Light from Heaven, sent down from God;
If ye be wise, adore and worship it!"

59. *Sheikh:* the governor of a tribe.

Mihrab Shah. An inquiring mind is led by the bite of a scorpion to ask why God, who is all-powerful and all-merciful, should allow the existence of the evil of pain. He asks Ferishtah to explain it to him. Ferishtah first points out that there is much to be thankful for in the existence of those beneficent laws which constantly save one from pain, and then asks the inquirer what bond there would be between man and man were pain abolished, finally leading him to a recognition of the worth of pain, by questioning him in regard to his feelings for the Shah. The inquirer has no admiration for the Shah, whom conditions alone have put in power, not the wielding of his own sword; nor has he any for the princely generosity for which the Shah has to make no sacrifices; nor for his graciousness, which is easy for one constantly receiving adulation; nor for his blameless life, which only goes to show that having all at command he does not deign to take the lower pleasures. But when Ferishtah declares that the Shah is suffering from ulcer in the stomach, then the sympathies and pity of the inquirer are at once aroused.

The Lyric gives another view of the worth of pain. The beloved one who is weak of body is strong of soul, and

achieves much, while the lover who is strong of body has sluggishness of soul and aims he does not carry out. Yet perhaps in this way they may complement each other.

Mihrab Shah: an imaginary personage.

27. *Firdausi:* one of the greatest of Oriental poets. He was employed by the Sultan Mahmud to write a metrical history of Persia, called the "Shah Nameh." Though possessing little historical value, it has much interest on account of its legends and its poetical beauties.

81. *Simorgh:* a fabulous monster of Persian mythology, whose sex is not clear. It was of a benevolent disposition, and had the power to bestow on human beings magical powers. The griffin is said to have been derived from it, though, in its migrations to Europe through the Arabs of Spain, it lost its character for benevolence, and became a terrific creature.

92. *Tebriz:* a great and ancient city of Persia, capital of the province of Azerbaijan.

A Camel-Driver. Ferishtah is led to discuss the subject of punishment through having related to him the case of a murderer who is suffering a just punishment for his crime. The murderer accepts it as his due, but grieves that the one who instigated him to the deed should have escaped, yet is comforted when he thinks that God reserves for him Hell's hottest. Ferishtah, illustrating his point by the story of a camel-driver's treatment of a camel that bites, declares that punishment as a human institution is justifiable because it is a means for teaching, but that it does not behoove man, therefore, to suppose that God will subject him to eternal punishment. The other speaker draws from this the conclusion that the escaped sinner should rejoice because he has evaded punishment, and so has fulfilled God's will in regard to him. To this Ferishtah replies that such a conclusion is a mistake; for in every man's soul are the laws by which he stands or falls. If he sins through ignorance, he is safe from punishment, but if he, with full knowledge, break any of these laws of his own soul, though he escape punishment in the

ordinary sense, the pangs of his conscience will be Hell to him. The conclusion is that man is justified in administering punishment to the guilty, but God punishes through man's conscience, and since, on this account, the guilty can never escape punishment, there is no need of further punishment in the future.

The Lyric gives expression to the wish that one's real faults might be detected, instead of over-punishment given to slight faults, though there is comfort in the fact of the over-punishment which balances the lack of punishment for the bad faults.

1. *Pilgrims' soldier-guide:* an imaginary personage.

29. *Rakhsh:* the wonderful steed of Rustem, the hero of the "Shah Nameh." He was conquered by Rustem with much difficulty, but afterwards became his constant companion in all his strange and wonderful adventures.

Two Camels. Ferishtah replies to the questions of one who is surprised that he does not teach mortification of the flesh as a necessary means toward wisdom, by the parable of the two camels. The lesson to be learned from this parable is that, in order to do one's work in the world properly, it is better duly to consider the needs of the body than to indulge in self-righteous abstemiousness. Ferishtah enlarges upon this thought to the effect that in order to give joy and happiness to humanity, it is necessary for one to know what joy and happiness are; therefore it is right to desire them and be thankful for them. The adversary (Satan) may scornfully ask if "Job feared God for naught," implying that he would curse God if it were not for his good gifts. Such scorn is out of place, since Job does not set himself up as the equal of God. If he did, God might be justified in declaring that since God and man were equal, why should he implant any want in man's heart that only himself could gratify? God would not have implanted the capability for joy and happiness in the human breast unless he meant man should beseech him to gratify it.

The Lyric teaches that through the joy of earthly love we learn what Heaven's joy may be, — not more intense than that earth offers, only more lasting.

38. *Doit:* a small Dutch copper coin of infinitesimal value; hence used to denote anything of small value.

46. *Chervil:* probably Myrrhis Odorata, which is found in Asia, and allied to the European chervil, used as a pot herb.

64. *Lilith:* Adam's first wife, according to the Jewish tradition. She was created when he was, while Eve was formed later from his rib (compare Genesis i. 26; ii. 22).

88. *The Adversary:* Satan. Job i. 9.

90. '*Does Job fear God for naught?*': translation of the Hebrew in the preceding line. Job i. 9.

95. מאלהים: *me Elohim*, from Elohim. Elohim is one of the names of God used in Genesis.

107. *Seven-stringed instrument:* one form of the Greek lyre had seven strings. It may have here the larger significance of the seven tones which are the basis of the musical scale.

The Lyric. 1. *Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder*, etc.: this figure is not wholly unscientific. There are unstable nitro-compounds in solid form which would become instantly dissociated into gas by the addition of a liquid like concentrated sulphuric acid. But reports louder than thunder and flashes brighter than lightning would not follow. (George A. Koenig in *Poet-lore.*)

Cherries. Ferishtah, as he finishes a breakfast of cherries, is interrupted by a friend, who marvels why he should thank God for such humble things. Since, as he says, the cardinal point of Ferishtah's doctrine is that there is never faith enough in man's weakness and in God's potency, then why is it not better to look up to the stars, and praise God for the great things, than worry about the little things pertaining to man's mean requirements? Ferishtah illustrates his side of the argument by two

tales, one which presents his opponent's view so strongly as to show its fallacy, and one which presents his own point of view, namely, that man's strength consists in acknowledging his weakness, and, realizing that only Omnipotence could have cared for his small needs, he should give God praise for supplying these lowest favors first, even if the motives of praise are not absolutely unselfish, rather than waste love on wonders beyond his comprehension. Through human feeling we have something tangible for which to be thankful, — the cherries soothe a roughness of palate, — but only his Maker knows why Mushtari was made.

The Lyric emphasizes the superiority of love-making over that of the intellectual pursuit of verse-making. The latter would require an infinite life and infinite powers of expression to perfect, while love condenses the infinite into the present without any effort.

19. *Mushtari:* the Persian name for the planet Jupiter.

Plot-Culture. A disciple of Ferishtah's is concerned as to whether the human manifestations of love are distasteful to the Maker's eye and ear, to which Ferishtah replies that man would not be human were it not that his place is cut off from the Infinite. The circle of his human relations evolves within the larger circle of his relation to God. As a gardener gives only the product of the ground to the ground's lord, so man need give only his soul, the product of his life's experiences, to God.

The Lyric is a passionate insistence upon the equal worth of sense with soul in love.

A Pillar at Sebzevar. Ferishtah propounds more fully in this his philosophy of love. He has found by experience that knowledge is ever being deposed by better knowledge, until he is convinced that knowledge which is gain (that is, absolute knowledge of the causes of phenomena) is unattainable. However, in the process of the search for knowledge, one not only gains an idea of the wonder of infinite knowledge, but receives ever renewed assurance that victory is yet to reach. On the other hand, love is

victory; that is, through feeling, no matter how primitive, we have a positive sensation which arouses an impulse of thanks and praise toward the Cause whence comes this power for joy. We do not even *know* the real nature of this source of love. We only know its effects in ourselves, and upon this truth we must base our faith. And why need we know or try to search out any further? To do so would be to attempt to circumscribe the Infinite, and bring it down to our comprehension, when all we require for our human needs is to be assured of the existence of the Infinite, and this assurance we get in our own consciousness of feeling and emotion, and the pleasure it brings. To the question "What may be unlovable?" Ferishtah replies, "Hate," and, further, that all the conditions and experiences of life are for the purpose of evolving man's wit, so that he can recognize love from hate and acknowledge love's use. Only thus will the creature and the Creator stand rightly related, the part of man being to ask for good and be grateful for it.

The Lyric indicates that love may express itself in silent feeling more effectually even than in words.

Sebzevar: also spelled Sabzawar, Subzawar, a fortified town of Persia in the province of Khorassan, sixty-five miles west of Nishapur.

77. *Gnomon:* the pin or style of the sun-dial which by its shadow tells the hour.

86. *Hudhud:* according to Eastern legend, Solomon's fabulous bird.

147. *Sitara:* Persian for "star."

A Bean-Stripe: also, Apple-Eating. This is an elaborate argument in answer to a cavilling pupil of Ferishtah's, who questions his decision that life is on the whole good and not bad. He illustrates with a stripe of black and white beans, which figure forth man's sum of moments, bad and good. Viewed separately, each appears black and white, but let the eye range over the whole, and the general effect is gray; so a joy is bettered by sorrow

which went before and sobered by the thought of sorrow to come. To the caviller it may appear dun, but to Ferishtah it appears gray, because he does not dwell upon the evils or the joys, but moves through all the experiences of life, giving them color from his own nature as the moon lights up the clouds through which she passes. This may be very well from Ferishtah's point of view, but his opponent asks if he has no sympathy for the world of pain outside his own life, where white is the predominating color. Like the aphis feeding upon its own little palm-frond, Ferishtah declares that he knows only his own little appointed patch in the world, and is unable to judge what may be evil or good to others. Still his perception that there is a world of woe about him might overwhelm him if he did not believe it to be God's care rather than his, and, as it is, it is sufficient to temper his optimism.

But the pupil objects to the standpoint that pain in the world outside Ferishtah's should be considered only as it reflects a shadow upon his joy. Has it no real existence for those who suffer? And why should God have singled out some to suffer pain? Ferishtah replies that he has learned to know how much life is made up of appearances, and that while this knowledge keeps white from triumphing, it also prevents him from seeing any unmitigated black. That is, that what appears evil may be in reality good, and, further, that God is omnipotent, and it is not for him to try to fathom the mystery of pain.

The pupil, still unconvinced of the predominance of good over evil in life, longs for the truth at any cost. This brings the argument to the point of reconciling the all-powerfulness of God, which must be accepted, with the impotence of man which we know. The only solution of this difficulty, according to Ferishtah, is to blend God's nature with man's, in order to find a medium by which we can interpret life. This blending can only be effected by imagining God as a loving being, though we confess this proof of his nature to be beyond the range

of absolute knowledge. Our very lack of knowledge proves the existence of a transcendent being. Ferishtah enlarges upon this thought, showing by various analogies that the secret of the force which manifests itself in the universe is unknowable, but the effects of this force are everywhere seen and felt. Against the objection that there is no direct evidence that this force is mind, Ferishtah takes his usual ground that the desire to thank some one for benefits received proves that there must be a mind to receive it. Then why not let your thanks be tendered to your fellow-man? Such thanks would fall back upon him who gave them, because it is not the external manifestations which call forth thanks, but the underlying force which gives rise to them. We are not thankful for the apple, but for our power of enjoying it. That is, throwing aside the symbolism used in the poem, through sensation and feeling, we are made aware of the Infinite, and our awe and reverence aroused.

The Lyric expresses the thought that man's work should not be done with the idea of receiving either thanks or love for it.

17. *Indian Sage:* Sakya Muni, or Buddha, the great Indian religious reformer. He was pessimistic and altruistic in his conception of life.

150. *Palm-aphis:* the aphis (plural, aphides) belongs to the family of homoterous insects. Same as plant-lice, and very destructive of the plants they infect.

297. *Ahriman:* the Persian personification of evil, opposed to Ormuzd.

298. *Ormuzd:* the Persian personification of good.

391. *Shalim-Shah:* King of Kings, in Persian.

422. *Rustem . . . Gew, Gudarz:* all characters in the "Shah Nameh."

425. *Sindokht:* the wife of Mihrab and mother of Rudabeh. Zal was beloved by Rudabeh, and Sindokht is described as having very skilfully brought the young people together. — *Sulayman:* also a character in the "Shah Nameh."

426. *Kawah:* a brave blacksmith in the "Shah Nameh." He revolted against the evil King Zohak, and, with the aid of Feridun, conquered him.

438. *Seven Thrones:* Ursa Major. — *Zurah:* Persian name for the planet Venus. — *Parwin:* Persian name of the Pleiades, a cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus.

462. *Fomalhaut:* a bright star in the Southern Fish.

472. *Zerdusht:* Zoroaster, who founded the national religion of Persia, and to whom supernatural qualities were attributed.

Epilogue. A lyric expressing a doubt as to whether an optimistic view of life is not, after all, but the illumination shed over it by love.

Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day.

Apollo and the Fates. A Prologue. The visit of Apollo to the abode of the Fates in order to ask them to grant length of life to Admetus, is made the occasion of a discussion upon the worth of life between Apollo and the "Dominant Dreads," who deal to each mortal his dole of light on earth. Atropos is ready to bring about the death of Admetus, when Apollo appears, illumines their darkness with his light, bids them hold a truce, and then asks that the life of Admetus, whom he loves, be extended to threescore and ten. The Fates doubt if his life would be any fuller of joy for such an extension; would it not be better to end it now in its prime? The beauty and joy of life is only, after all, an illusion produced entirely by Apollo's light gilding events. If this be true, why, asks Apollo, does man call himself happy, and friend always wish friend a long life, and, though he talk about the misery of life, he never willingly parts with it? All due to the glamour thrown over life by Apollo, the Fates still persist in saying. But Apollo suggests that perhaps some power resides in man himself by means of which he is able to see life as good. Then he introduces

them to man's invention of wine, persuades the Fates to taste and drink. The effect upon the Fates is intoxicating, and the good in life now appears to them to overtop the evil.

Apollo now explains how Bacchus, the youngest of the gods, wished to bestow on man something no other god had yet given him, otherwise homage could not be claimed from man. Bacchus, combining through his human mother and divine father, human instinct and divine mind, does not wish to change what already exists as planned by Zeus, but only to add a new element which will properly relate and harmonize all; just as Apollo might light up a cavern and show the gems and crystals already there, which once seen would henceforth be only masked by darkness. But, he asks the Fates, are thanks for this due alone to Bacchus, or did Zeus, the Anterior Wisdom, have a part in it? Without directly answering his own query, he admonishes the Fates that had it been given to mankind to know the full glory of Zeus, the knowledge would have been greater than they could have borne, and confusion would have resulted. It is man's part to explore with his reason until he accept good with bad, but the impulses which lead him to this decision are the work of Zeus, through man's soul, on his sense, — that is, the work of mind on feeling, — feeling or love, symbolized here as wine, being the especial gift of Bacchus. The Fates are persuaded to drink still more deeply, and end with a song giving voice to optimism so complete that they now glorify man's life as a triumph. A sudden earthquake startles them into soberness. Knowledge is born among them — an ambiguous thing — which reveals to them only that they cannot know absolutely what is the good or the evil of life, but only that life is a means for learning, and that the whole truth of it can only be known in death. Apollo agrees, but still asks long life for Admetus, though good and evil be blent in it. This is granted, provided any one can be found to forego the fulfilment of life for love's sake. Apollo believes Ad-

metus's friends, his father, mother, wife, will all vie with one another to serve him by dying, at which the Fates laugh sarcastically. This poem simply expresses Browning's usual philosophy in mythological symbols. The Fates are the forces of nature following out natural laws, though behind them is the power of Zeus. Apollo is hope that illuminates the events of life, but gives no real assurance of its worth, but through love, the wine of life, partly human, partly divine, a glimpse of the infinite is gained, which reason, guided by Zeus or the Absolute, accepts as a revelation of the truth sufficient to take man through life with faith in the ultimate triumph of love and good. The Fates, when drunk with wine, go to the extreme of thinking life itself the triumph, but when sobered realize it to be only the preparatory stage toward final triumph.

The references at the head of the poem show the sources whence Browning drew his inspiration for it. The passage from the "Homeric Hymn" to Hermes is thus translated by Chapman: —

> "There dwell
> Within a crooked cranny, in a dell
> Beneath Parnassus, certain sisters born,
> Called Parcæ, whom extreme swift wings adorn;
> Their number three, that have upon their heads
> White barley-flour still sprinkled, and are maids;
> And these are schoolmistresses of things to come,
> Without the gift of prophecy. Of whom
> (Being but a boy, and keeping oxen near)
> I learned their skill, though my great Father were
> Careless of it, or them. These flying from home
> To others' roofs, and fed with honeycomb,
> Command all skill, and (being enraged then)
> Will freely tell the truths of things to men.
> But if they give them not that God's sweet meat,
> They then are apt to utter their deceit,
> And lead men from their way."

Shelley has also made a translation of it. The passage from the "Eumenides" reads as follows in Plumptre's translation of Æschylus: —

"This didst thou also in the house of Pheres,
Winning the Fates to make a man immortal.
Thou hast o'erthrown, yea, thou, laws hoar with age,
And drugged with wine the ancient Goddesses."

Bohn's edition of Euripides gives this prose translation of the citation from "Alcestis": "Did it not suffice thee to stay the death of Admetos, when thou didst delude the Fates by fraudful artifice?"

1. *Parnassus:* a mountain in Phocis, sacred to the Muses, Apollo and Bacchus.

4. *Dire Ones:* the Fates, goddesses supposed to preside over human life, — Clotho, who spins the thread of life; Lachesis, who determines the length of the thread; Atropos, who cuts it off.

5. *Admetus:* King of Thessaly. He was served for a year by Apollo in the capacity of shepherd. Zeus took this means of punishing Apollo, who had shot his darts at the Cyclops. Apollo had been led to do this because he was angry at Zeus for having killed his son, Æsculapius, the latter having presumed to bring a dead person to life. Admetus won the hand of Alkestis, daughter of Pelias, by fulfilling, with Apollo's help, the condition imposed by Pelias, that he should have her, who came for her in a chariot borne by lions and boars. Having fallen ill, Apollo interceded with the Fates for his life, with the result told in the poem. For the story of Alkestis's sacrifice for him, see Browning's own translation of the Alkestis of Euripides in "Balaustion's Adventure."

6. *Couched in the womb of our Mother . . . Night:* according to Hesiod, the Fates were the children of night.

16. *Woe-purfled:* embroidered with woe. — *Weal-prankt:* decked out with prosperity.

23. *Moirai:* plural of Moira, Greek for the goddess of Fate, used in the singular in Homer, where she was especially the goddess of death.

29. *Goddess-sent plague:* woven by Lachesis into the destiny of Admetus, was a vengeance of Artemis which

befell him on the day of his marriage. He had slighted her by omitting the usual sacrifice, and in punishment of this she sent a crowd of serpents to meet him in the nuptial chamber; but Apollo effected a reconciliation between them.

57. *Zeus:* the supreme god in the Greek Pantheon and ruler over gods and men.

156. *Since Semele's son . . . since fathered by Zeus:* Bacchus, the god of wine and vegetation, was the son of Zeus and Semele, the daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia. When Zeus appeared to her with all the splendor of his thunders and lightnings, she was consumed by the flames. Zeus hid Bacchus, whom he saved from the flames, in his thigh.

192. *Cummers:* gossips.

198. *Collyrium:* medicine for the eyes.

261. *Pheræ:* a town in Thessaly, where Pheres, the father of Admetus, reigned.

With Bernard de Mandeville. The poet calls upon the old sage, Bernard de Mandeville, to help him in his argument that evil and good harmoniously combine for a beneficent purpose in life. The poet asks no full disclosure of knowledge. He aspires only to know what man may, realizing that without his weakness man would have no spur to further effort. The opponent in the argument complains that there is no proof that God wills right should have supremacy on earth. He fears the strife will never cease in this life, and there is no assurance that even death will free right from the yoke of wrong. Furthermore, if Power and Will have the ordering of life, why did they not strangle evil in its birth? Mandeville, speaking through the mouth of the poet, suggests that it may have been by design that evil was sown along with good, even that good may have sprung consequent on evil's neighborhood. Other theorists have said that mere unintelligence scattered the seeds of good and evil; but once admit that it was done by design, then for man, thinks the poet, to root out evil entirely would be to

thwart the purposes of the designer. The opponent declares that he can see no evidences of forethought in the prevalence of evil, which seems to him better accounted for on the theory that it is the malignant contrivance of an enemy; for granted that in the end good triumphs, why should evil be allowed to flourish even for a moment by an omnipotent power? In the face of this problem, he concludes that man would better not trouble himself to imagine God's purposes or try to confine the Infinite within the limits of finite understanding. In other words, the existence of evil is such a hard nut to crack that the only refuge is in agnosticism.

The poet answers this with illustrations meant to show that in our human selves we have a symbol of the Infinite by means of which we can get some idea of God's attributes, just as in the plan of Goethe's estate, the A which marks his house is not actually like it, but stands as a symbol of it. The objector still contends that it is better to think of God in abstractions. The poet then clinches his argument by an original application of the Prometheus myth, to the effect that all the earth acknowledged the glory of the sunlight, and gave praise for it, except man, who complained that all the lower forms of matter feel the developing influence of the sun until each form of plant and animal stands a completed type; and so it is with man, as far as his physical nature and attributes are concerned, but his superadded mind needs to do as well as to be. It craves knowledge of the mysterious causes which underlie these wonderful phenomena, desires to understand the mind outside through the mind inside. Such desires are all in vain; hence he would not drag that mind forth to face his, but longs for some incontestable proof that such mind exists — one spark from the sun which would enable man's mind to conceive the nature of its power.

Then Prometheus helped him by offering an artifice whereby an image of the sun in little could be obtained. That is, by means of the senses a lens is formed through

which the rays of the Infinite pass, producing the emotion of love, and this is the humanized image of the Infinite which assures of its existence, though its nature be not fully revealed. Mrs. Orr suggests that the opponent in the argument is meant for Carlyle.

Bernard de Mandeville was born at Rotterdam, Holland, in 1670. His father was a physician, and he also studied medicine at Leyden, took his degree in 1691, and practised in London, though not with much success. "The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turned Honest," to which Browning refers, was a satirical poem published by Mandeville in 1705 in defence of the war-policy of the Duke of Marlborough, showing that his ambition was really of benefit to the state. His arguments were to the effect that individual self-seeking and greed of office are necessary to the prosperity of the state. He republished the poem in 1714, with a commentary more fully explaining his views, and again in 1723 under the title of "The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices." The gist of his philosophy, as given by Ueberweg, is, "What is called a vice is in fact a public benefit. There is no distinction between the moral impulses or springs of action. Each in its place is natural and legitimate, and the general welfare is best promoted by giving indulgence to all. The restraints on human desires and passions by the magistrate and the priest are factitious and unnatural. Any restraint upon private vices is simply usurpation."

Browning, as he indicates in the opening stanza of the poem, interprets Mandeville after his own fashion, and chooses evidently to consider him a prophet of the doctrine of the relativity of evil and good, so popular in recent thought, as a solution of the problem of reconciling evil with an omnipotent and beneficent power. Browning's own standpoint seems to be that since, through human love, we know that the Infinite power must be capable of love, then we can be sure that evil is allowed for some good purpose.

70. *Addison's tye-wig preachment:* Addison's orthodox views of life would necessarily be opposed to doctrines

considered so fallacious as were those of Mandeville. Addison was poet, essayist, and critic, and is remembered especially for his contributions to the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* (1672–1719).

126. *Mandrake:* same as mandragora, a genus of plants belonging to the order Atropaceæ. Called by the Arabs Devil's Apple. From the fancied resemblance of the root to a human form, many absurd superstitions have been attached to it.

176. *Goethe's Estate in Weimar:* Goethe's is the most distinguished name in modern German literature. Author of the dramas "Faust," "Goetz von Berlichingen," "Tasso," "Iphigenia in Taurus," "Stella," and "Count Egmont," besides celebrated novels and many beautiful lyrics. In 1779 he entered the service of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and soon after took up his residence there (1700–1776).

189. *Orion:* a brilliant constellation of the winter sky.

204. *A myth may teach . . . Euripides not Æschylus:* this refers to the fact that Æschylus confined himself to orthodox presentations of Greek myths, while Euripides often indulged in original interpretations of them, showing that his moral ground had shifted from that of the earlier poet. So Browning makes his own interpretation of the Prometheus myth.

300. *Thus moaned man till Prometheus helped him:* according to the myth, Prometheus stole fire from heaven in a hollow fennel stalk, and gave it to mortals, from whom Zeus, who yearned to destroy the race of man, had taken it. Browning makes Prometheus get fire from the sun with a lens, whereby he focussed the rays of light from the sun, and so got an image of it. A convex glass lens will diffract rays of light passing through it from the sun to a focus, and if a sheet of paper be placed at the focus, a tiny image of the sun will be caught.

With Daniel Bartoli. The poet, parleying with the Jesuit Bartoli, contends that there are people more worthy of saintship to be found in the chronicles of life than any told

about in the superstitious legends of the saints. He illustrates by a story of a duke, who fell in love with an apothecary's daughter at the house of his sister, and determined to marry her. At the time, the king was arranging with the duke to have him leave to the crown his dukedoms. When the king heard of the proposed marriage, he objected to a match so degrading to the dignity of the royal house. But, at the advice of his minister, he adopted a plan which would settle it for his own benefit. At the nuptial banquet the lady was called out by the minister, and told that she must get the duke's signature to a paper which stipulated that he was to cede his dukedoms to the king immediately, in which case the lady would be recognized as a duchess, adopted into the royal household, and receive all the honor due her station, otherwise she would be carried off to a convent at once. The lady returned to the banquet, and, explaining the situation to the duke, she declares that she had accepted his hand for love's sole sake, conscious that she could waive all power and wealth for his sake as he could for hers, and now the opportunity has come for her to test this, and she is ready to give up a life of love with him and the splendors of the court, rather than have his honor sullied by such an agreement as the king proposes. If he could so stumble in his choice as to desire to keep her youth and beauty with him, rather than to preserve the integrity of her soul by not making her a party to his dishonor and her own degradation, he will lose her love as well as her external self. Her test seems to be will he choose honor and a glorified, self-sacrificing love, or dishonor and love in the flesh? The duke is incapable of deciding; so, by leaving him, she saves his honor and her soul. Her love for him, however, is gone, because of his indecision where duty should have been as plain to him as to her. She afterwards marries a young man who, though at the time this happened he was only ten years old, fell in love with her. He left the court for her sake, and was fully rewarded with intense happiness until she

died. At her death he contemplated becoming a monk, but afterwards returned to the "old way in the world." The poet patches up a sort of saintship for the duke, whom he represents as ensnared by a bold, black-eyed, tall creature who appeals to his coarser nature. She is supposed to argue that he would never again have succumbed to virtues like those of his lost love, but before such fascinating impudence as hers, how could faith but fall! To which he retorts that the real man in him is dead, and is still faithful to the old love, while she has only his ghost, and some day his soul will again be called into life by his ideal love.

Daniel Bartoli's personality has nothing further to do with the poem than that his credulous belief in the legends of the saints roused Browning's opposition, and caused him to insist there were better saints in real life than any in the church. Browning describes him in a foot-note as "a learned and ingenious writer," but follows this statement with a note by Bartoli's Italian editor to the effect that his historical work so overflows with superstition, and is so crammed with accounts of prodigious miracles, as to make the reading it an infliction. The text of the note is as follows: "Fu Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia; onde scrisse lunghissime storie, le quali, sarebbero lette se non fossero ripiene traboccanti di tutte le superstizione. . . . Egli vi ha ficcati dentro tanti miracoloni, che diviene una noia insopportabile a chiunque voglia leggere quelle storie: e anche a me, non mi bastò l'animo di proseguire molto avanti." *Angelo Cerutti.* Bartoli was born in 1608 in Ferrara, and became a leading preacher in the Jesuit order, and its historian. He is also the author of several works on physical science, morality, and the Italian language. Mrs. Orr says that Browning, as a young man, had so great an admiration for one of Bartoli's works, "De' Simboli trasportati al Morale," that when he travelled he always carried it with him.

The story Browning tells in the poem is related by Mrs. Orr as follows: —

"Charles of Lorraine fell violently in love with Marianne Pajot, whom he met at the 'Luxembourg' when visiting Madame d'Orléans, his sister. She was 'so fair, so modest, so virtuous, and so witty' that he did not hesitate to offer her his hand; and they were man and wife so far as legal formalities could make them when the monarch (Louis XIV.) intervened. Charles had by a recent treaty made Louis his heir. This threatened no obstacle to his union, since a clause in the marriage contract barred all claims to succession on the part of the children who might be born of it. But 'Madame' resented the mésalliance; she joined her persuasions with those of the minister le Tellier; and the latter persuaded the young king, not absolutely to prevent the marriage, but to turn it to account. A paper was drawn up pledging the duke to fresh concessions, and the bride was challenged in the king's name to obtain his signature to it. On this condition she was to be recognized as duchess with all the honors due to her rank; failing this, she was to be banished to a convent. The alternative was offered to her at the nuptial banquet, at which le Tellier had appeared — a carriage and military escort awaiting him outside. She emphatically declined taking part in so disgraceful a compact:[1] and after doing her best to allay the duke's wrath (which was for the moment terrible), calmly allowed the minister to lead her away, leaving all the bystanders in tears. A few days later Marianne returned the jewels which Charles had given her, saying it was not suitable that she should keep them, 'since she had not the honor of being his wife.' He seems to have resigned her without further protest.

[1] Her reply was that if she possessed any influence over M. de Lorraine she would never use it to make him do anything so contrary to his honor and to his interests; she already sufficiently reproached herself for the marriage to which his friendship for her had impelled him; and would rather be "Marianne" to the end of her days than become duchess on such conditions. The reply has been necessarily modified in Mr. Browning's more poetic rendering of the scene.

"De Lassay was much impressed by this occurrence, though at the time only ten years old. He too conceived an attachment for Marianne Pajot, and married her, being already a widower, at the age of twenty-three. Their union, dissolved a few years later by her death, was one of unclouded happiness on his part, of unmixed devotion on hers; and the moral dignity by which she had subjugated this somewhat weak and excitable nature was equally attested by the intensity of her husband's sorrow and by its transitoriness. The military and still more amorous adventures of the Marquis de Lassay make him a conspicuous figure in the annals of French Court life."

Browning draws on his imagination for the subsequent history of the duke.

97. *Pari passu:* with equal pace.

245. *Saint Scholastica:* this was the name of a sister of Saint Benedict.

246. *Paynimrie:* the land of the Infidel.

273. *Trogalia:* fruits, sweetmeats, dessert.

332. *Sea-foam-born Venus:* Venus, according to the myth, was born from the foam of the sea, and was wafted to the island of Cythera.

335. *Samson when his hair is shorn:* Judges xvi. 19.

With Christopher Smart. The poet introduces this parley with a recollection — he knows not whether it was an actual event, a dream, or a fancy — of his exploring a house, room after room, in which he found nothing but decent mediocrity, until he suddenly enters the chapel, where hangs a wonderful picture of the Raphael Madonna, evidently by a modern artist who combined all the genius of the new and the old in art, making Raphael touch Leighton and Michelagnolo join Watts. From this room he went forth expecting to find further surprises in the rooms beyond, but he sees only the same commonplaceness that had before met his gaze. This experience the poet takes as a fit symbol by which to diagnose Christopher Smart, whom he describes as a man sane and sound

at starting, when all at once the ground gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke curled up and caught him, or, perhaps, down broke a fire-ball wrapping flesh and spirit both in conflagration. . . . Off fell the flame-robe, and the transfigured man resumed sobriety. This refers to the fact that the one piece of fine work done by Christopher Smart was a poem written by him during a fit of insanity in his cell. He recovered, but never wrote another line of true poetry. Now, the poet would like to know how it came that the artist he imagined only once reached art's supreme, combining new and old, and similarly, Christopher Smart only once drew near to the genius of Milton and Keats — the superhuman pair — and afterwards subsided into insignificance. Just as a sphere can touch a cube only at one point, so, perhaps, the all-unapproachable allowed impingement only once. From Milton to Keats, Smart was the only one who pierced the screen 'twixt thing and word. Aside from the explanations given by the vulgar and the doctor, how can the fact be accounted for? Was it that the disguise fell from Nature, and every object thoroughly revealed, sense comprehended the whole truth, so that the soul could trust the tongue to express it in language exactly fitting the vision? And did he never write any more poetry because he judged that those who make poetry must reproduce each strength and beauty as they come — that is, must work upon the inspiration of the moment? The poet thinks that such flashes revealing beauty do effectual service, but that something more should follow; they should be used for instruction. Beauty and strength are everywhere. Why particularize every example of it? Eyes and ears need only so much strength and beauty as may be used to account in learning life's lesson.

Though he declares the other method is favored in our day — that is, to depend upon inspiration and fancy rather than upon the patient building up of experience for poetical material — he believes that through studying life, we shall best learn the meaning of Will, Power,

and Love, and may then climb to heaven by means of this knowledge.

Christopher Smart was born at Shipbourne, in Kent, in 1722. He showed signs of cleverness as a boy, and was sent to Cambridge by the Duchess of Cleveland, who allowed him forty pounds a year till her death in 1742. He was a good student, though his habits were bad, and became a fellow of Pembroke, and the winner of the Seaton prize five times. He came to London and mingled in the literary coteries of the time, but was not a shining mark, as it is recounted that his friends were frequently called upon to help him out of difficulties. Among his various scribblings the only thing of his which will be remembered as a work of genius is his "Song to David," which was written while he was in confinement for unsound mind. Dissipation is said to have unsettled his mind and brought him to death from the effects of poverty and disease. (1722–1771.) His "Song to David" has called forth the admiration of more than one critic. The editor of Ward's English Poets declares that "there is nothing like the 'Song to David' in the eighteenth century. There are few episodes in our literary history more interesting than this of the wretched bookseller's hack, with his mind thrown off its balance by drink and poverty, rising at the instant of his deepest distress to a pitch of poetic performance unimagined by himself at all other times, unimagined by all but one or two of his contemporaries." According to Mr. William Rossetti: "This wonderful poem of Smart's is the only great accomplished poem of the last century. A masterpiece of rich imagery, exhaustive resources, and reverberant sound." It was first published in 1763 in separate form, and republished in 1819 by the Rev. R. Harvey. A copy of the poem may be found in Chambers' "Cyclopædia of English Literature."

40. *Rafael Mother-Maid:* Raphael painted a number of Madonnas, among which may be mentioned the Madonna del Baldacchino and the Madonna del Gran Duca,

in the Pitti Palace, Florence; the famous Madonna di San Sisto, now in the Dresden Gallery.

90. *Rafael:* the great Italian painter (1483–1520). — *Leighton:* Sir Frederick, modern English artist. — *Michelagnolo:* same as Michael Angelo, the celebrated Italian painter, sculptor, and architect (1475–1564).

91. *Watts:* John, modern English painter.

96. *Milton and Keats:* Milton (1608–1674) was the last of the brilliant lights in English literature that had made so illustrious the age of Elizabeth. Keats (1796–1821) was a bright particular star that lit up the dawn of the Victorian age of literature.

120. *Hayley:* William, an English literary man of no great distinction, the friend and biographer of Cowper. He also wrote essays on "Painting, Sculpture, and Epic Poetry."

176. *Your key denting it on the wainscot:* the story goes that Smart wrote his thoughts down on the walls of his cell with a nail or key.

180. *From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough:* this "Song of David" was so little appreciated by Smart's contemporaries, that an edition of his poems was printed with his only masterpiece omitted.

181. *Smart's who translated Horace:* this translation is a literal prose one, and is now published in Harper's "Classical Library."

195. *So, indeed, wallows the whale's bulk*, etc.: this is not a direct quotation from Smart, and is not even suggested by anything in the "Song of David." There are lines in the Seaton prize-poems which probably did suggest these to Browning: —

> "While here above their heads Leviathan,
> The terror and the glory of the main,
> His pastime takes with transport, proud to see
> The ocean's vast dominion all his own."

And these: —

> "'T were but the echo of the parting breeze
> When Zephyr faints upon the lily's breast."

With George Búbb Dodington. This poem is a cynical presentation of the art of statecraft by the poet, who assumes for the time to agree that such selfish aims as those of Dodington were permissible, but that he did not understand the true means by which he might have attained his selfish ends and at the same time gain the admiration of men. The successful statesman sketched in the poem is said by Mrs. Orr to be Lord Beaconsfield as Browning saw him.

Before proceeding to explain what was wrong in Dodington's statesmanship, the poet supposes it to be admitted that seeming zeal for the state should be combined with a due regard for one's own welfare, for does not Scripture teach that the laborer should have his hire? Those who carp would better observe how birds build their nests, all rough outside, but snug as possible inside. In fact, there is no sort of bird that does not suit his taste, from the human mud-lark that smoothens its lodging with pelf, down to the bower-birds Darwin tells about, that, for the sake of vanity, prepare a platform stage upon which to strut. The permissibility of selfish aims he has admitted in order to disarm Dodington at the start, who might, when taken to task for his way of working, argue that only a fool considers profession to mean performance. Agreed, then, that all outside show is sham, Dodington must concede that there is in all people a something which is antagonistic to the "sprightliest scheming brain" bent upon accomplishing great things (presumably for the people), would but heart consent! that is, would but the people sympathize with the aims of the scheming brain. But Dodington trips, in that, his aims being allowed to be right, his methods of accomplishing them are wrong.

For this one night, then, the poet says, we profess one purpose, that is, a selfish end to be gained by a zealous pretence of doing good to men at any expense of tired body or wearied soul. The fame we seek as disinterested slaves of the state will be accomplished by making

the populace think that their every hope and fear is ours, and that we place ourselves above them in order that we may reach them out a hand and help them to ascend, and that we brave all storms for their sake, though there be no prize to gain but martyrdom. Still such saviors must have some help from those who are to be saved, and the question is how to coax them to co-operate. Dodington would say: "Persuade the Public somehow that we seek solely their good; that our strength, knowledge, ability were all lent us to use for them." But the poet declares the Public is not to be taken in in this manner. No animal, much less lordly man, obeys its like. Rule began with power, then intelligence must move strength, but at this late day who can boast himself as possessing more strength or intelligence than the ungraced who crowd the ranks? But Dodington would rule by love (that is, a pretence of love), to which the poet retorts that there is n't one of us who does not consider that he is the most worthy of persons to receive enjoyment, which he will get by craft, if he cannot get it by force or wit, and suggests that Dodington try some other trick than this. The world is so full of Dodingtons that he must find some better means for coaxing it to allow him power and place. Here the poet suggests that Dodington ought to have argued that he did not consider himself to have any such community with men. His key to domination should have consisted in his introduction of an element that would awe man, namely, the Supernatural, which is not found in this doubting age where it used to be found. Old mystery is sent adrift to nothingness. New wizard-craft makes shift without the old helps. Even the conjurer of to-day is found to be an ordinary man, yet everybody recognizes something uncanny about the "quack," and perhaps he may have some real potency unguessed by us. If Dodington had played this new card of statesmanship, he might have carried all before him. Since all of us can distinguish between right and wrong, should such a statesman-shape

be qualified as God, man, or beast? Since the people ignore the disguise and bow before him, they would never call him "quack." They may hear him shift his ground from one year to another, but are so awestruck, they never observe the change or criticise the dubiousness of his position. He has such imperturbability that it is just as likely to be based upon innocence as impudence. They would find it impossible to lie and present such a front to the world. A blush would disclose their untruthfulness at once, but he goes deeper and finds a conscience underneath such a conscience as theirs.

If he were really an impostor, he would play another game, and pretend to great earnestness, but everything such a one says is qualified by a smile. He adulates by intimating that there are a chosen few who understand that his methods are not meant for them, but for the crass majority. Such coarse flattery moves them. They suspect they are being half despised when a Dodington attempts to demonstrate that his sole intent is to work for their good. Neither will it do simply to sneer at them, but if he will disparage himself and laughingly seem to scorn the end persistently pushed toward, they will think him a master mind to win for their service. They would not believe an avowal of unselfishness; they would believe and reject him if he acknowledged a selfish aim. But when they see that though he owes his place and position entirely to their esteem, he gibes and mocks at them, they think that ordinary mortals would be afraid to jeopardize their souls with such lying; therefore he must be subject to some influence they are strangers to. Dodington was unable to grasp such a theory or practice; he abjured the precept, to succeed in gratifying selfishness and greed, declare you do not possess these qualities yourself, as being worn out; he did not fall back on a pretext of working for hearth and home, which might have saved him, nor did he adopt the last resource, namely, the disguise of pretending to drop disguise, and present truth that looked like

lies. He should have said he held not the people but himself in contempt. He should have given them to understand that he regarded them only as puppets to make sport for him, and held them in submission to his will just for will's sake, and they would have bowed before one who so openly pulled the wires, as if he obeyed some supernatural law above man's. Not having worked this way, Dodington was a failure.

George Bubb Dodington, born in 1691, became a member of Parliament at the age of twenty-four. He held important positions in the government. His own advancement was his only aim, and to secure it he changed his political opinions several times. In his diary he frankly avows that his political life was guided alone by selfish motives. His character was well understood, for he has been described by various writers as being "a composition of vanity, versatility and servility," and as being "wholly directed by the base motives of avarice, vanity, and selfishness." Among his aspirations was that of becoming a patron of literary men, and by this means he secured praise from them that helped him in his political career. He lived only one year after the height of his ambition was reached, in 1761, by his being made Baron Melcombe. The praise he received from those he patronized was counteracted by the fact that he was the butt of the wits, having been satirized by Pope and Churchill among others.

16. *Laborers deserve their hire:* Luke vii. 1.

17. *Who neglects his household:* 1 Timothy v. 8.

40. *Darwin:* the celebrated English naturalist, who describes the habits of birds in his "Origin of Species."

41. *Bower-birds:* birds of the genera Ptilorhynchus and Chlamydera, which are ranked under the starling family. They are found in Australia. They are called bower-birds because they build bowers as well as nests.

78. *Coprolite:* petrified excrement of carnivorous reptiles.

219. "*Since we . . . all of us have one human heart:*"

probably a paraphrase of "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Shakespeare, "Troilus and Cressida," iii. 3. 175.

234. *Æs triplex:* triple armor.

249. *Quid vis?* what do you want?

327. *Ventum est ad triarios:* it is come to the third rank.

With Francis Furini. The poet describes how good Francis Furini was as a man, a priest, and a painter. Though as a painter he could not vie with a Michael Angelo, his imagination not having been equal to his workmanship, yet he is better than the type of artist that has brain but little hand-facility, and simply tries to suggest his brain fancies with the brush as a poet may legitimately do with language. He declares that he cannot believe the story told of Furini by Baldinucci, that when he was on his death-bed "weakness played the thief with reason," and he begged his friends to buy and burn all his pictures, to make amends for the fact that in them he had painted women nude, much to the horror of the chronicler, who is made to remark that he could not have learned to paint them except by actual sight of them. He had himself confessed the enormity to Philip (Baldinucci), and offered as an excuse that he (Baldinucci) did not know what the agony of art was to satisfy itself in imitating nature. Only fools could suppose that in moments of artistic enthusiasm idle fancies would be possible. This would not convince a blockhead like Baldinucci, but strengthens the poet's incredulity as to the story. He prefers to think that Furini's dying breath was spent in a fervor of thanksgiving for the fact that he had used his best powers in painting "God's best of beauteous and magnificent revealed to earth — the naked female form." His wrath would boil at the thought of such an impurely minded critic as Baldinucci styling himself an artist. He is only a poor pretender, who regards the nude in art merely from the point of view of the sensualist, and knowing himself to be such, teaches others that all noble art in

the nude has been instigated by sensual thoughts. This Baldinucci never did anything but grunt and sniff outside art's pale. But Furini is the sacred artist, if indeed he has been dowered with a head that looks upwards and a hand that can lead to beauty's central glory (the spirit within the flesh), the uninstructed who might otherwise take the outside film for beauty itself, or, worse, regard it as fog obscuring the inner beauty, or, worst, wish only the outside semblance of beauty to exist, because the essential beauty is so degraded by the impurity of their thoughts, "sky's pure product thickened from earth's bog." Some of the worthiest have failed to trust their own soul's insight because artists have prized mere external form so that their better sense has not descried the spirit-beauty within the halo of flesh, and they have enmeshed the marvel which custom could blind only the vulgar eye to. There is little fear that Furini will so offend, but the Philistine (like Baldinucci) should be smitten. Any one who acknowledged that he could not look upon diadems without desiring to steal the gems would be sent to consort with thieves by the guard of the regalia. The poet suggests here that Furini's prayer might be that God would give him grace to see and reverence his purpose in making the human shape a mask for the divine, and that he will give him strength to paint truth not falsehood, to love the type untampered with.

And, prayer done, the poet proposes that Furini shall preach to a modern London audience, and tell them, since even science encourages it, how the truth appeared from his point of view even if it be only a pin-point. He addresses the Evolutionists, declaring that they get glimpses of truth from heights which he gets from depths. Their stations being so opposite, how shall they agree? The Evolutionists strain to the top of things until they are stopped by the question as to what spasm set all things going. Not able to climb any higher, they drop down to where atoms somehow think and know themselves to be, and the world 's begun. Man is so far the sum of

being, but he possesses no power (that is, absolute power), and only so much knowledge as shows that it ends in ignorance on every side; knowledge is not even equal to the problem of saying what is large and what is small. Man, however, has something not found anywhere else in nature, namely, a moral sense. If he had been endowed with knowledge and power, it would have been so much the better for the universe, since man sees everywhere faults to mend, and omissions to supply which he has the will but not the power to improve. Man, however, accepts pre-eminency, because of his moral instincts, over blind force, which is mere knowledge undirected in its course, not caring whether its results are good or bad. To such blind operations the crown could not be awarded, but rather to man, whom alone righteousness adorns. There is no sign of moral sense either above or before man, and who can guess whether there is any behind phenomena? And until some new dispensation of things appears there cannot be expected to be any boon of intuition which will change evil to good and upset man's experience so far. The Prime Mind, as we see it revealed in man, is, then, not either wise or strong, or he would have made wrong, not right, paramount in the world, as man would will. Therefore Man stands confessed supreme, because he would will to have things better than the Prime Mind has arranged to have them. Unfortunately ignorance makes him impotent; the only assurance he has of light being simply the measured knowledge that "ignorance exists."

Furini, however, would begin at the bottom. He knows just one fact, his self-consciousness, round which is ignorance on every side. Behind this consciousness must be a cause, which is called God. Knowledge of this cause does not go farther than a feeling that whatever he apprehends within him takes its rise from outside by laws wholly unknown. How can he project his knowledge upon what comes after him? Not by soaring like the scientist, but by climbing, keeping one foot firm on

the fact that consciousness, which he calls the soul, expresses itself through the body. His pictures will prove that he knows something of the body, and how it is empowered by the soul to express every mood of love and hate. Besides giving permanence to these truths of the soul, he has saved the beauty of the body. Does not that which is underneath the flesh-perfection prove that his labor was not lavished in vain? Yet whatever marvel is plucked from its hiding-place, or veil from nature, the secret of the cause is never seized, but is proved to be external to the manifestation. His next step is not so certain, for the outside universe seems to have no reality, and man no knowledge but that of self-consciousness. And how did the irreconcilable confusion of Good and Evil in the outside world tally with his experience when he kept his stand upon man's consciousness and from there struck out sparks of truth? He found Evil was Good, though why must be left to the First Cause It is enough that the present moment is his, and permits him to divine what shall be. To the question how this can be he would answer, how could it be otherwise? Could the First Cause have insured such joy to the soul through the body, and itself lack in will, power, and benevolence? He has no doubts at all on this score. And thus, the goodness and power of the First Cause proved, it lights up the ignorance he before shrank from, and shows that knowledge of Good could only come from knowledge of Evil, and that Evil is the constant spur to the attainment of larger knowledge of Good. The war of pain with joy is waged for soul's instruction.

To those who snarl, "You claim that the whole outside world must suffer in order that you may gain wisdom," he declares, "By no means." He gains only a little knowledge which is satisfactory to himself, but how these problems appear to other people he is unable to say. If he could be perfectly sure that Evil was illusion, all knowledge would go from him, because knowledge comes of the comparison of opposites. If it were made perfectly evi-

dent that pain were only a mask of pleasure, there would be no striving to rid the world of pain. Though in the long run wrong be right, wrong must seem wrong to do right service, and if it be objected that no such illusion is possible, he declares that just here is his solid standing-place; that from the operations of his soul and body upon each other he learns how things outside teach what is good and what evil, whether fact or feigning be the teacher. Therefore Furini concludes the first thing to do is to acquaint oneself with the body, which is the temple of the soul.

The poet ends by declaring that instead of bidding him burn his pictures he would suggest that he paint Joan of Arc, not as she is usually painted at the moments when she is hearing the voices inspiring her to save France, but bathing, as she is described in the memoir of her by D'Alençon; though he must not paint her face, for that would be beyond him.

Francis Furini, who was born in 1604 and died in 1649, studied art with his father and afterwards with Passignano and Rosselli. Later he went to Rome and worked with Giovanni di San Giovanni. He was fond of painting nude figures, and chose subjects where such treatment of the human form would be appropriate. Among them were paintings of Adam and Eve, Lot and his Daughters, Death of Adonis, Diana and the other nymphs bathing, and the Judgment of Paris. He is described as having been good in drawing but defective in color, and sometimes wanting in refinement. The incident upon which the poem is based is true, for on his death-bed he asked that all his undraped pictures might be collected and destroyed, though his request was not carried out. It seems doubtful whether Browning had much ground for his faith in Furini's reverence for the body, since the story goes that his change of sentiment in regard to art led him at the age of about forty to become a priest, which office he filled in a very exemplary manner in the parish of St. Ansano in the Mugello. He did not, however, give up painting altogether.

6. *Saint Sano's church:* same as Saint Ansano, in the Mugello.

7. *Mugello:* a fertile region of Tuscany.

42. *Agnolo:* Michael Angelo.

75. *Filippo:* Baldinucci, an Italian artist and biographer, author of an "Italian History of Art" from which Browning drew his materials for the portrayal of Furini (1624–1696).

141. *Andromeda:* a constellation in the Milky Way.

146. *Ossa:* a mountain of Thessaly, said to be one of the mountains piled one upon the other by the giants to scale heaven in their wars with the gods.

165. *Leonard:* Leonardo da Vinci, the famous Italian painter and sculptor (1452–1519).

173. *Correggio:* Antonio Allegri, called Correggio from the town in which he was born. A celebrated painter (1494–1534).

177. *Night and Morn:* colossal figures in marble in a chapel of San Lorenzo Church in Rome decorated by Michael Angelo, and consecrated by Pope Clement VII. to the memory of his ancestors and relations.

180. *Eve:* painting of the creation of Eve on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michael Angelo.

490. *Andromeda:* daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea, who was sacrificed to a sea monster.

501. *Some old artificer could do as much:* Mrs. Orr says of this: "The old artificer who could make men 'believe' instead of merely 'fancy' that what he presented to them was real, refers especially to the Greek painter Zeuxis; but it is suggested by the generally realistic character of Greek art."

585. *Sainte Beuve:* a modern French poet, critic, and historian (1804–1869).

585. *Quicherat:* the editor of the papers on the trial of Joan of Arc, *Procès de condemnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, in five volumes (1841–1849).

590. *D'Alençon:* Percival de Cagny, a retainer of the Duke d'Alençon. He wrote a personal account of the life

of Joan of Arc which may be found in the fourth volume of Quicherat.

616. "*Omnia non omnibus:*" all is not for all.

With Gerard de Lairesse. The poet addressing Gerard de Lairesse does not consider him entirely sorrow-smitten because he was struck blind. Though he was hindered from painting any more of his mythological fancies or antique human personages embraced and counselled by nymph or god, he was not dumb, and wrote a book "On Artistry's Ideal" valued more highly by the poet than his pictures, which he had taken the trouble to familiarize himself with because of his admiration for his book, especially the part called "The Walk," which had been read in boyhood. The sober and sound piece of advice in this was to the effect that artists could by the exercise of their imagination find abundant value in all commonplace things. This dictum is illustrated in various ways from one end to the other of "The Walk," one of the most striking examples being his imagining a lightning-struck sepulchre to be Phaeton's tomb, and a fragment of a broken wheel the remains of the Chariot of the Sun. Did the fact that he was blind so free Lairesse's mind that he could supply the blind with fancies better than facts fate denied? His mind could invent things and leave out all trifles mean and base, retain nothing but beauty. Fancies born in Greece illuminate the commonplace Dutch earth, for he is like the painters and poets who would not see anything to paint or portray in the commonplace alone. Our poet, however, is content with earth's common surface, yet he understands Gerard de Lairesse, and proceeds to discuss the question as to whether it would be an advantage to mingle false with true. Could he be content to give up an English apple for a Dryope plucking the blossoms of her lote tree, he who sates sense with the simply true, and does not try to heighten the effect with the feignings which were a characteristic of the elder age? The reason for this was that fancy imagined a strife between sense and

soul, since sense cannot be contented with mere outward things, and soul must needs know whence springs the outward things that sense loves.

Man should not lose any of his acquisitions, yet the links which used to bind earth to heaven have snapped. Fancy has been pushed aside by unseen fact, which mind bids sense accept. Is mind to blame for usurping or sense for abdicating? Could we walk, if we wanted to, where Lairesse walked and not see flowers and weeds simply as such, but link with them the ultimate perfection? This were to go backwards. What he did the modern mind could do, but it would be to sink, not to progress. The poet holds that we see deeper than those of old, because we see the soul rather than the body. He proposes that he shall walk once more "The Walk" with Lairesse, seeing as he sees.

There follow here five stanzas, all supposed to be in the old style, in which nature is improved upon by imagination. It is a description in a grand manner of the progress of the day from night round again to sunset, and with every phase of the description is connected some imaginary flight into Greek mythology or history. The result is, as Browning intended, a mass of high-sounding language, with much less thought behind it than is customary with Browning, though he has presented his pictures in such a way as to suggest phases of Greek thought. The first, describing daybreak amidst strife and storm, shows the struggle of Zeus and Prometheus, and symbolizes the ideal of love for man in conflict with the ideal of God as power. The second, describing the morning, introduces Diana as the ruthless huntress and spoiler by death of the happiness of marriage, and symbolizes the ideal of human happiness at war with the envy of the goddess. The third describes noon, and in the myth introduced of the Satyr and Lyda symbolizes the persecution of lust. The fourth describes evening, and introduces the historic figures of Darius and Alexander of Macedon fighting for supremacy, and symbolizes the

material victory of Greece. But in the last, day dies away, and the ghost which appears symbolizes the futility of the religion and material splendor of Greece. The poet here stops this fooling to find some fitter way to express his satisfaction that the Past is indeed past, and gives way before Life's best and last, the Future. Life should occupy itself with striving toward the Future, while the soul recognizes that nothing has been which may not be bettered. Climb the tree to where the fruit ripens in the blaze of day, not busy oneself with unearthing the root, though the flowers of the past should not be despised or thrown away any more than climbing should be stopped. Finally, those poets are mistaken who believe in the recapture of ancient fable, and cannot recognize the value of a new-born fact, unless it is rendered back in art as made pallid by fancy.

Browning contends that art should deal with what is and not with what seems. Greek lore is dead and buried. The best truth that Greece babbled of was nothing but a shade, holding on as well as it might to the old loves here.

Though the poet agree with Achilles that death is the last and worst of man's calamities, he is sure that what once lived never dies, and what here attains to a beginning has no end. The terror of death is removed because the heart breaks the bond with time, and reaches toward what shall be.

So a modern poet salutes the spring joyously as he sees its beauty directly revealed to him in the flowers, even to those growing on a grave, where the Greek bard would sadly say, "Spring for the tree and herb, no spring for us."

Gerard de Lairesse was born in 1640, at Liège, and studied with his father and Bartolet. He lived in Amsterdam, and there gained friends, fame, and wealth, being esteemed highly by the Dutch, who ranked him as their "Second Raphael" (Hemskerk was their first). He is described as having been an artist of unequal merit,

though possessing decided signs of genius, with fine coloring and an expression "generally lively." Allegorical and mythical subjects appealed to him especially, and were treated in a manner and spirit so unreal as to convey very little of truth. In the words of Mrs. Orr, "De Lairesse was a man of varied artistic culture as well as versatile skill; but he was saturated with the pseudo-classical spirit of the later period of the Renaissance; and landscape itself scarcely existed for him but as a setting for mythological incident or a subject for embellishment by it." Toward the end of his life Lairesse became blind; but his friends used to gather about him and listen to his discourse upon the ideal in art. They took down his remarks, which were published after his death (1711) by a society of artists under the title "Treatise on the Art of Painting." A translation of this work fell into Browning's hands when he was a boy, and he was especially delighted with "The Walk" described in it under the heading "Painter-like Beauty in the Open Air."

50. *Faustus' robe:* the magic mantle by means of which Faust and Mephistopheles were wafted through the air. See Goethe's "Faust."

51. *Fortunatus' cap:* Fortunatus was a hero of popular German romance in the sixteenth century, who was the recipient of two gifts — a purse, which he would always find full, and a cap, which would take him anywhere he wished to go.

79. *Chariot of the Sun:* Phaeton asked the privilege of driving his father's (Apollo's) chariot for one day. Apollo granted the request much against his will, and Phaeton came to grief; for, not being able to manage the horses, he set the world on fire, and Zeus was obliged to strike him down with his thunderbolts. Ovid, "Metamorphoses," x.

120. *Dryope:* wife of Andraemon, when gathering flowers for the altars of the nymphs one day, plucked the purple blossoms of a lotus plant to give to her child.

Her sister, Iole, about to do the same thing, noticed that the plant was bleeding. It turned out to be the nymph Lotis, who had been transformed to escape a pursuer, and she was so much displeased that she changed Dryope into a lotus also. Ovid, "Metamorphoses," ix.

143. *Acquists:* acquisitions; obsolete.

170. *Protoplast:* the originator.

196. *Jove's feathered fury:* the vulture sent by Jove to prey upon Prometheus. In Mrs. Browning's translation of "The Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus, she speaks of "Zeus' winged hound," the strong carnivorous eagle; and Browning, in line 198, uses the epithet "eagle-hound." This passage has more than one reminder of the closing portions of Mrs. Browning's "Prometheus Bound."

245. *Artemis:* Greek name for Diana, the goddess of hunting. She had many attendant nymphs, all bound to virginity, like herself.

283. *O Satyr*, etc.: this myth is told as follows by the Greek poet, Moschus (Lang's translation):

> "Pan loved his neighbor, Echo; Echo loved
> A gamesome Satyr; he by her unmoved,
> Loved only Lyde; thus through Echo, Pan,
> Lyde and Satyr, Love his circle ran.
> Thus all, while their true lovers' hearts they grieved,
> Were scorned in turn, and what they gave received."

332. *Macedonian, is it thou?* Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia, who invaded Persia, and conquered Darius, the King of Persia.

382. "*Dream afresh old godlike shapes*": this passage might be taken as a hit at the attitude of Matthew Arnold, who always sighed for the good old classic days.

395. "*A shade, a wretched nothing*": Greek art and civilization failed because of its lack of provision for future development. All ended for them in an after existence of impotent ghosthood in Hades.

409. *Be death with me, as with Achilles erst:* Achilles in Hades replies to Odysseus, who consoles him because

he is still a prince there: "Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, great Odysseus; I would rather be a serf bound to the soil, the hireling of a man with little land or wealth, than bear sway over all the departed." See Bryant's "Odyssey," book xi.

With Charles Avison. The poet looking out of his window on a cold March morning, sees a bird tugging away at a bit of cloth-shred hanging from a nail that once helped to tack up a creeper on the wall at the end of the garden. He is surprised that this blackcap should have come so far away from the country where he could find booty for making his nest comfortable in abundance, to pick on this rag of manufacture. Yet it is not any stranger than the fact that his own memory roams back a hundred years till it descries the appropriate rag to plunder in an old March of Avison's, to which he really believes he was led by the word "March." This old thinnish air brings up to him the vision of innumerable dream-marchers, marching with fife and drum, cymbal and trumpet; yet it was as simple a melody as possible, with no novel modulations, no discords in the harmony. There is no knowing where it would have ended if he had not come back to his sober self and realized what an undeveloped piece of music it was that had carried him from the composers of to-day, Brahms, Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt, back to the days when Handel reigned, though not supreme, for he had rivals in Buononcini, Geminiani, and Dr. Pepusch.

From this the poet is led to wonder why it is that music which once filled heart and soul loses its direct emotional effect as new forms of music appear, and retains only its power of historical association. As the figured worthies of a wax-work show attest such people existed, so old music attests that such emotions once existed. He is convinced that no truer truth is obtainable by man than that which comes of music. Then he defines the soul as the something which exists underneath the recognized workings of the mind. The mind is

like a builder working with loose facts to build up our solid knowledge, but underneath rolls the soul which the mind cannot tame, and from which emerges feeling. No matter how much labor has gone to the building up of the complex structure of mind, ministered unto by its tribe of senses, it is comparatively easy to understand its processes, while the secrets of the passions of the soul can never be discovered. To strike all this soul-life dead, and render hard and fast what we feel as what we know, is the puzzle Music tries to solve but fails in, though she approaches to it nearer than the other arts which essay the same thing; and why do they fail? The province of art is not to supply the mind with knowledge; it simply re-arranges materials already known, and produces change but not creation; but could soul's evanescent moods be captured by the art which yearns to do so, Music, the primal impulse of the soul would thus have its very birth recorded in an unchangeable shape. Poetry and Painting are aware of passion's rise and fall, and do not altogether fail of staying the apparition. But Music, which really dredges deeper and gives expression to the depths of the soul, yet fails in making this expression permanent. Thus, although Music touches more nearly than the other arts the truth of the soul, it is unable to give as great a permanence to its truth even as the other arts. Love, hate, joy, fear, survive, but a Handel's expression of them loses its power to move, and Gluck comes upon the scene; and so on.

The poet, however, decides to let others note the ever-new invasion, and devote himself to re-infusing with liveliness a sleep that looks like death. He will use all the musical knowledge he received from his teacher, Relfe, which knowledge he speaks of under the symbol of a laboratory filled with phials containing chemical reactives, to resuscitate the old music, and he will treat Avison's old March to such a crowding of the score with harmonies and breakings of rhythm and beats that there will follow Titanic striding toward Olympus.

However, he changes his mind. Even if the March were only in one part instead of three, he would not subject it to such an irreverent innovation.

The final conclusion of all his talk is that though music's throne seats somebody whom somebody else unseats, yet what once lived shall never die. Only bring our life to kindle theirs, that is, put ourselves in sympathy with the time that produced the music, and it will live again. Wherefore? he asks, but before answering will modulate into the minor key, instead of marching on in Avison's bold C major. In this minor modulation he expresses a doubt as to whether the knowledge of one age does not become the nescience of the next, which if true would be a most lamentable fact.

To this doubt, he answers in the bold C major of Avison, to the effect that truth was at full within man from the first, and though the forms it takes may fade, the truth itself ever escapes from expressions insufficient for the future but of infinite value for saving truth in the age that produced them. Therefore Avison is to bang his drums, for a march motive is a truth that endures resetting. With sharps and flats lavished, and instruments not spared, fitting march music may be woven for the future big with the thought, or he is mistaken, of a federated England.

Or suppose he should transform the notes of Avison's March into the long dull notes of the Elizabethan Plain Song, and so bring up a clear picture of that age, and at the same time in the necessary brushing aside of bars fill the sky with stars, that is, reveal beauties in the March that would not be suspected until it was compared with the music of three hundred years earlier.

But he will not consider night or day, but with Avison champion man's cause. He is loath to think that the music at the time of England's best, the days of Hampden and Pym, was not equal to the occasion, and pictures how the rough hymns of the Roundheads set the heart athrob. The most fitting symbol of that time

would be a great glad subject of Bach's, in which their rough voices could all join, and Avison could help. Then for Avison's march Browning supplies words in a poem to Pym.

Charles Avison was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1710, and in 1736 became organist of St. Nicholas Church there, a position which he held until his death. His musical education was begun in Italy, and continued under Geminiani on his return. Among his musical compositions are five collections of concertos for full band, and two sets of sonatas for the harpsichord and two violins. As well as being a composer he was an eminent musical critic of his day, and wrote a little book entitled "Essay on Musical Expression," in which are to be found some curious and entertaining ideas on this subject. This now forgotten book created quite a sensation in its day, and called out a criticism from Dr. Hayes, who was again replied to by Avison. This "ingenious, polite, and cultivated man," as he is called by a contemporary, was the centre of a small circle of music-lovers whose tastes he directed and who were his devoted disciples in matters of musical opinion.

45. "*March*": a copy of this in MS. was possessed by Browning's father; the music is given at the end of the poem.

81. *Great John Relfe:* Browning's teacher in music, and a celebrated contrapuntist.

84. *To fitly figure such a bass:* a method of learning to write chords in succession by writing a bass with figures to each note to indicate the chords to be written over them.

88. *Tonic down to Dominant:* the simplest possible change in the succession of chords. The tonic is the chord on the first degree of the scale, the dominant that on the fifth degree. In this "March" the harmony begins on the tonic and falls to the dominant.

99. *Brahms, Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt:* all modern German composers, recently dead, except Dvorak, who is a Bohemian and is now in New York.

101. *Handel reigns — supreme:* Handel's opera "Radamista" was so successful that a party jealous of his ascendency was formed against him, Buononcini and Ariosti being among them. They had been attracted to London by the Royal Academy of Music, and each had a following. To settle the difficulty, they wrote an opera "Muzio Scævola" together, Ariosti writing the first act, Buononcini the second, and Handel the third. Ariosti's was nowhere in the competition; and though Handel's was universally declared the best, the friends of Buononcini held by him, and they were joined by all the people Handel had offended, so that fashionable London was divided into two camps. Byrom wrote a celebrated squib on the event, —

> "Some say compared to Bononcini
> That Mynheer Handel 's but a Ninny ;
> Others aver that he to Handel
> Is scarcely fit to hold a candle :
> Strange all this difference should be
> 'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee !"

Handel, one of the greatest of the classical composers, was born in Halle, 1685, and afterwards went to England, which became his adopted country. He died there in 1759.

105. *Geminiani:* an eminent violin-player and composer, who came to England in 1714 and gained a great reputation as a virtuoso, though he did not often play in public. When he played at court, he insisted that Handel should accompany him.

107. *Pepusch:* upon Handel's arrival in England Dr. Pepusch, recognizing his superior merit as a composer, retired from that field, and devoted himself to the study and teaching of the laws of musical composition, and gained great fame therein.

121. "*Suite*" : a set of pieces.

122. "*Fugue*" : a composition in which a given theme is imitated at an interval of the fifth in the second part, at the octave in the third part, at the fifth again in the

fourth part, while all the parts are harmonized in counterpoint. See note to "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha," in "Dramatic Lyrics."

133. *Hesperus:* the song to the Evening Star, in Wagner's opera "Tannhauser."

226. "*But where are they, my brothers*": see Pope's "Iliad," iii. 301.

232. *Painter's fresco:* Michael Angelo's fresco of the Creation of Eve on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

253. "*Radaminta*": probably a mistake for "Radamista," for a time one of Handel's most popular operas. It contained the favorite air "*Ombra cara di mia sposa*," in which a husband weeps for his wife whom he supposes dead.

255. *Rinaldo:* another of Handel's popular operas.

270. *Gluck:* an eminent composer of opera, born in Weidenwang, 1714. Noted especially for his new departures in opera-form, which caused much unappreciative criticism at the time, but proved to be an important step in the direction of Wagnerism and the modern opera.

272. *Haydn:* the distinguished composer, called the father of the symphony and quartette. Born in Austria 1732; died 1809. — *Mozart:* celebrated composer, born in Salzburg in Austria in 1756; died 1791.

302. *Discords and resolutions:* a discord, or more properly a dissonance, in music is always followed by a resolution, or concord.

304. *Modulate* (*no Bach in awe*): Bach wrote in the stricter contrapuntal style of composition, before modern laws of modulation had been developed.

305. *Change enharmonically* (*Hudl to thank*): to modulate enharmonically is to change the name or signature of a note without changing the pitch, and then follow this chord enharmonically changed by a chord of the same scale, of which the changed chord has now become a member. Hudl was an obscure German musician, whose

only claim to fame seems to be that he wrote "A Tabular View of Modulation from any one Key to all other Keys, Major or Minor." This is evidently Browning's reason for being grateful to him.

309. *Largo:* a very slow movement.

310. *Rubato:* a movement expressing the ebb and flow of feeling in a limited time.

312. *Georgian years:* the time of the Georges in England.

332. *Purcell:* an eminent English musician, composer of church music, operas, songs, and instrumental music (1658–1695).

385. *Ophicleide:* a bass-horn. — *Bombardon:* a low-pitched bassoon, or latterly the lowest-pitched Sax-horn.

392. *Little-ease:* cells too small for the prisoner to stand up or lie down in were called "Little-ease." — *Tyburn:* place for public execution of criminals in London. It was situated near the present northeast corner of Hyde Park.

400. *Larges and Longs and Breves:* forms of notes used in the musical notation of the middle ages. The *large* was an oblong square with stem at the right; the *long*, square with stem at the right; the *breve*, smaller square, without a stem.

410. *Hollis:* Denzil (1597–1680), one of the leaders in the Parliament in 1629, joining with Sir John Eliot in objecting to the King's levy, and when the Speaker refused to put Eliot's remonstrance to vote, he read it himself, and held the Speaker by force in the chair till it was passed, and was sent to the Tower in consequence. See "Strafford." — *Haselrig:* Sir Arthur, introduced Pym's bill of attainder against Strafford, and was one of the five members Charles tried to impeach in 1642. Died in the Tower, 1661. See "Strafford." — *Strode:* a supporter of Pym, and prominent among the leaders of the Parliamentary party. Was in prison with Eliot. — *Hampden:* John (1594–1643), of Buckinghamshire, born in London; in 1626 imprisoned for refusing to

contribute to forced loan; leader of Commons in 1636, in objection to imposition of ship-money; took up arms in the civil war, falling in the engagement of Chalgrove Field against Prince Rupert. See "Strafford." — *Pym:* John (1584–1643), born in Somersetshire, educated at Oxford, member of Parliament for Tavistock, in Devonshire, 1614, and successive Parliaments, and one of the managers of the impeachment of Buckingham in 1626. See Browning's "Cavalier Tunes," I. 7. 16, and "Strafford."

412. *Southwark:* a district of London which at this time supplied "trained bands" to be used in quieting disturbances, making arrests, and so on.

Fust and his Friends. An Epilogue. Fust is visited in his retreat by seven sanctimonious friends, who come for the purpose of persuading him to repent of his compact with Satan which is threatening the safety of Mayence. They bring up to him all they have heard about him, — how he won Helen of Troy for his accomplice in sin (a reference to the second part of Goethe's "Faust"); how he had been the leader in a drinking-bout where by his magic he had caused a vine to grow out of the table, etc. (a reference to the first part of "Faust"); how strange honors had been heaped upon him. Fust, who has denied that he trafficked with fiends, admits that he has been pursued by the fiends of wickedness within his own soul, and begs to be forgiven and let alone. Then the friends vie with each other as to which one is best fitted to extract the truth from him as to his mysterious practices. It devolves upon the Seventh Friend, to whom Fust replies that he has repented of all his sins, has made amends to man, and was about to be elated when the thought occurred to him that he was not sure whether he has brought man advantage or hatched a strange serpent, but he begs them again to leave him to his fate. The friends' curiosity is whetted by this admission; and more excited than ever, and as Fust will answer no more questions, they propose exorcising the fiend with which he

is supposed to be possessed, but cannot between them remember aright a Latin psalm potent in its effect upon fiends. The Sixth Friend had a copy of it but parted with it, whereat the Seventh Friend breaks out that he would have emptied his purse ere he would have parted with such a prize. At this Fust declares that, like Archimedes, he has a place to stand on, "Pou sto," and is saved; that is, he is assured that his invention (of printing) is needed by man. The friends think Archimedes must be his familiar spirit, and are duly disturbed. Then Fust shows them specimens of his printing, which includes the psalm they were trying to think of, and they are much astonished. Then he shows them in the inner room the press at work, and describes how the conception of it was born in his mind and after years was perfected till it became as they see it. And for this he thanks God, from whose imposed tasks he has not shrunk. All creation glowed with God's impress, he felt himself forgiven, and empowered by God to perfect his conception of the printing-press which would shed abroad truth.

So he found redemption for his sins in making restitution to truth, by means of fixing facts in print which would otherwise through the process of oral transmission become lies, and by the multiplication of copies truth could be given to the hind as well as to the noble. He then tells how the idea was suggested to him by the art of the goldsmith who engraved patterns on gold. The friends after this description think it all very simple, and Fust, again addressing God, acknowledges that all is due to Him, through whose impelling force all created things aspire toward knowledge; that knowledge is limited for all, but through this limitation all realize that there are new vastnesses of knowledge outside to be explored. Those who whine over man's ignorance he would ask if it would be better to have the wisdom of swine, who know they were "born for just truffles to hunt." Man's prerogative is to know that he does not know and yet never swerve in his pursuit of knowledge. Thus he approaches

toward and ever yearningly follows the Infinite. His types, though only mechanical, will help man to spread abroad every fresh accession of wisdom, the food for the mind.

The friends query why, if he is happy as he says he is, he has looked so woe-begone of late; to which he replies that it is because he has realized that his aid for the dispersion of truth will equally aid the dispersion of lies. The First Friend declares that this had struck him from the first, and points out the disadvantages which will follow, recalling a *mot* of John Huss that implies that the inventor of printing is the swan to quench the fire of bigots.

John Fust was the son of a rich burgher of Mayence, but the year of his birth is not known. His brother was a goldsmith, and he was a banker and broker. Fust came into relation with Gutenberg, the true inventor of printing, through having lent him money in 1449 with which to carry on his experiments. The agreement was that Fust was to continue to give Gutenberg three hundred florins a year, in consideration of which he was to have half profits. The agreement was not adhered to on the part of Fust, who nevertheless brought suit against Gutenberg in 1455 and won, whereupon he moved away all the printing materials belonging to himself, and set up a rival establishment in Mayence, with Peter Schoeffer to help him. The first book from his press was the "Psalter," referred to in the poem as the sheets containing the psalm the friends tried to think of. It was a folio of 350 pages, and appeared August 14, 1457, being the first book with a complete date.

Among the various accounts more or less incorrect of Fust's connection with printing may be cited that of Trithemius, written in 1514, in which he says: "Peter Schoeffer, at that time a workman, but afterward son-in-law of the first inventor, John Fust, a man skilful and ingenious, devised a more easy method of founding types, and thus gave the art its present perfection. And the three men

[Gutenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer] kept secret among themselves, for a while, this method of printing, up to the time when their workmen were deprived of the work, without which they were unable to practise their trade, by whom it was divulged, first in Strasburg, and afterward in other cities." Also that of a nephew of Fust, Jo. Frid. Faustus, who wrote : "Fust had many workmen, among whom was Peter Schoeffer of Gernsheim, who, when he perceived the difficulties and delays of his master, was seized with an ardent desire to accomplish the success of the new art. Through the special inspiration of God, he discovered the secret by which types of the matrix, as they are called, could be cut, and types could be founded from them, which, for this purpose, could be composed in frequent combinations, and not be singly cut as they had been before. Schoeffer secretly cut matrices of the alphabet, and showed types cast therefrom to his master, John Fust, who was so greatly pleased with them, and rejoiced so greatly, that he immediately promised to him his only daughter, and soon after he gave her to him in marriage. But even with this kind of type, great difficulty was experienced. The metal was soft and did not withstand pressure, until they invented an alloy which gave it proper strength. As they had happily succeeded in this undertaking, Fust and Schoeffer bound their workmen by oath to conceal the process with the greatest secrecy ; but they showed to friends, whenever it pleased them, the first experimental types of wood, which they tied up with a string and preserved."

For artistic purposes Browning has chosen to consider Fust the real inventor of printing, and to adopt the stories which identified him with the Dr. Faustus of magical fame whom Goethe has immortalized, and which attributed magical powers to him on account of the rapid production of his books.

12. *Sib :* relation.

32. "*Words of the wise are as goads*" : Ecclesiastes xii. 11.

35. *Palinodes:* used figuratively to mean a recantation.

55. *Barnabite:* a religious order inferior in learning and theological attainments to the Dominicans, who were experts in matters of heresy.

62. *Sir Belial:* Satan.

65. *Helen of Troy:* this refers to the marriage between Faust and Helen in the second part of Goethe's "Faust," used by the poet as a symbol of the wedding of Classic and Romantic art.

74. *That out of their table there sprouted a vine:* refers to the incident near the end of the scene in Auerbach's cellar in the first part of "Faust."

86. *Skinker:* tapster.

90. *Rhenish . . . Raphal:* kinds of wine.

92. *That liquor sprang out of the table itself:* near the beginning of the scene in "Faust" mentioned above.

101. *Strange honors were heaped on thee:* this happens to Faust in the second part of Goethe's drama.

104. *Goldsmith by trade:* his brother Jacob was the goldsmith.

114. *Shall Barnabites ape us Dominican experts:* see note to line **55.**

121. *Famulus:* servant.

135. *Bell, book and candle:* a ceremony in the greater excommunication introduced into the Catholic Church in the eighth century. After reading the sentence, a bell is rung, a book closed, and a candle extinguished.

136. *Balm yet was in Gilead:* Jeremiah viii. 22.

151. "*Heureka*": usually spelled Eureka, "I have found it out;" the exclamation used by Archimedes, the Syracusan philosopher, when he found out how to test the purity of the gold in Hiero's crown.

162. "*Ne pulvis*": the friends are so uncertain of the psalm that it is best not to venture any suggestion as to which one it is.

166. *Asmodeus:* an evil spirit mentioned in the apocryphal book "Tobit." — *Hussite:* follower of John Huss, who adopted the principles of Wickliffe and was burned as a heretic.

190. *Pou sto:* a place to stand on. Archimedes said, "Give me a place to stand on and I could move the world." He was referring to the power of the mechanical contrivance of a lever.

203. *Initium to finis:* beginning to end.

226. *Myk:* evidently the name of the Sixth Friend.

258. "*Cur*" *miss a* "*quare*": this is a rather complicated pun, suggesting the image of a hunting dog missing the quarry, that is, the game, and also the idea of their question "Why is this?" missing a larger question, "cur" being a contracted form of "quare," meaning "wherefore." The friends are to have a larger question answered than they ask.

363. "*Plough with my heifer*," etc.: Judges xiv. 18.

368. "*Rectius si quid novistis im-per-ti-te*": if ye have known anything better, impart it.

420. "*Semper sint res uti sunt*": As things are, so may they always be.

456. *Beghards:* a term applied to heretics during the middle ages. — *Waldenses:* a sect said to have derived its name from Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, who practised what he regarded as the pure doctrine of the Scriptures.

457. *Jeronimites:* also written Hieronymites: an order of hermits in the middle ages.

468. "*An cuique credendum sit*": whether every one must have his belief. — "*Ans*": used with an English plural meaning questions or doubts, *an* being used to signify a question. It suggests also a goose, "anser" being the name in ornithology for a goose.

ASOLANDO.

Prologue. An exaltation of the clear sobriety of sight that comes with age to the poet, divesting nature of the alien and falsifying vari-color that made her seem divine, and reporting her works truly as akin to man, God alone transcending both nature and man.

5. *Iris-bow:* or rainbow. Iris was the goddess of the rainbow, the messenger of the gods. The soul is supposed here to have lent each common object a bow of color not properly belonging to the object itself, but to a power above it.

13. *Chrysopras:* a mineral product of the quartz species, greenish gray in color, according to Dana. Browning's idea of its color was perhaps derived from its Greek etymology, χρυσός, gold, πράσον, leek (the likeness to the leek referring not to color, but to the cleavage of the stone). He has evidently in mind the primary colors, red of the ruby, green of the emerald, and yellow or golden, into which a lens or prism diffracts a ray of white light.

21. *Asolo:* where Browning wrote this poem, and completed "Asolando." "Pippa Passes" is laid here, and "Sordello" refers to it. It is a picturesque town, in the province of Treviso, in Venetia, Italy, whence may be seen the Euganean hills, the cities of Treviso, Vicenza, Padua, and Venice, the blue line of the Adriatic, the snow-capped peaks of the Alps. The ruins of the castle where the beautiful Caterina Cornaro lived, the "Kate the Queen" of the song in "Pippa Passes," crown the height above the town. Pietro Bembo, the historian of Venice, afterwards Cardinal, to whom Browning refers in the Dedication of "Asolando," was Caterina's secretary, and a prominent member of the literary group she collected at her little court. His "Degli Asolani," which derived its name from Asolo, described the idyllic life of this court of Caterina.

27. *The Bush burning but unconsumed:* Exodus iii. 2–6.

Rosny. A girl whose lover has gone to the war holds dreamy converse with herself, her mind divided between a mood in which she pictures her pride in him when he will return with an honorable scar on his face, while he declares that with her love in his soul he could not do other than conquer his foes and return to her safe; and another mood in which she pictures him dead on the

battlefield, driven to his fate by her love, and in which she finds her heart agreeing that this is better, since certain envious ones might sneer otherwise over a hero returned safe from the war.

2. *Clara, Clara:* this refrain makes the poem difficult to interpret. It has been suggested that Clara is a rival whom the speaker addresses. It seems rather to the present editors to be the speaker's grief-stricken address to herself, showing the conflict between her love and ambition, and the realization that if her lover falls, it will be because her ideal of heroism has driven him to his fate.

7. *Rosny:* Maximilian de Béthune, Duke of Sully (1560–1641), was called Rosny, from his birthplace, the Château of Rosny, on the river Loire, near the town of Nantes. Sully or Rosny was wounded at the battle of Ivry, in the neighborhood, and carried back to his castle on a litter. Whether the poem is founded on fact or not is uncertain.

Dubiety is an expression of the restlessness underlying the plausible content that may come in the autumn of life, when the nature is prone to lull itself in a neutral comfort, deadening the actualities of the outside world. Such comfort is, however, reminiscent of an earlier sensation, the fruit neither of dreaming nor musing. It is but a faint reflection of the genuine emotion stirred of old by a certain woman's kiss. That reality only is excellent.

Now is a lyrical outburst expressing the ardent desire for a moment satiate with mutual love at the cost of all the past and the future, and implying that it alone would be enough, because it would qualify existence thenceforth.

Humility sings the sufficiency of a favor carelessly let fall upon an unknown lover, while many more such favors are lavished on the recognized lover.

Poetics illustrates the insufficiency of the usual metaphors of love poems conventionally drawn from the inanimate or the lower animal world to celebrate fitly the beauty of human love.

Summum Bonum. In a moment of love, which is the highest good, all the beauty and truth of the universe are concentrated.

Summum Bonum: the supreme good, a phrase used by philosophers of various schools, the supreme good being found in mental or moral good, or in pleasure or painlessness or serenity of temper.

A Pearl, a Girl, expresses the magic the word telling a girl's love can work in her lover, in comparison with the spell the right word can evoke from some Oriental gem.

Speculative. New mental faculties, new perceptions of nature, or new varieties of artistic expression may be the desire of others in the new life to be enjoyed in heaven; the return of the old life of earth, bringing with it pain for the lover, pleasure for his loved one, is his sole craving, so that they be but together again forever.

White Witchcraft is a playful interchange of teasing abuse of each other by two lovers. Supposing that they had Jove's power to transform themselves into beasts, the man proposes that the woman be turned into a fox for her sweet stealthiness, and when she retorts that he shall become a toad to be shunned, he turns the tables on his sorceress by making the best of the transformation, reminding her of the pearl he wears in his forehead and the love he bears in his eyes.

White witchcraft: supposed to be harmless magic, that derived from the devil being black.

2. *Play Jove:* a reference to the changes in shape made by Jove in pursuing his love-affairs.

3. *Stealer of the grapes:* see Æsop's Fable; also, Song of Solomon ii. 15.

7. *Canidia:* Horace's name for a sorceress in his fifth and seventeenth Epodes, here applied sportively.

8. *A pearl beneath his puckered brow:* referring to the almost universal legend of the gem concealed in the toad's head. See Shakespeare's "As You Like It," ii. 1. 13.

9. *His eyes that follow mine:* Browning found in the garden of his father's house in Hatcham, when they removed there from Camberwell in 1835, a toad, which, says Mrs. Orr, in her "Life and Letters of Robert Browning," "became so much attached to him that it would follow him as he walked. He visited it daily, where it burrowed under a white-rose tree, announcing himself by a pinch of gravel dropped into its hole; and the creature would crawl forth, allow its head to be gently tickled, and reward the act with that loving glance of the soft, full eyes which Mr. Browning has recalled in" this poem.

Bad Dreams. A sequence of lyrics revealing, one after the other, the troubled moods of a husband and a wife who are conscious of some disturbance in their loving relation to each other.

I. The woman dreams that she is assured of the estrangement of the man's love and faith in her, and wakes, recognizing with relief, first, that it is only a dream, and then, that the pang made no difference in her own love.

II. The man tells his dream with the air of suspicion which it betokens and foments in him. In a huge temple he saw men and women pairing reluctantly and making merry gloomily. Passing thence into a side chapel, he saw his wife offering unutterable homage to a king of darkness throned in a shrine. How, now, is her apparent outer self to be reconciled with that hidden night-debauch? Her reply is the dream she had, one utterly whimsical and inconsequential, which disarms his and makes light of it.

54. *Giaours:* infidels.

III. He dreams again, of a forest, pathless, the haunt of some primeval monster. Thence his soul passes on to a shining city. His only fear is lest its silence and solitude may not stay unbroken. Then comes a third sight, a city ruined, a forest forcing its way through pavement and masonry with ravening fangs. The city symbolizing

art, the forest nature, are each good alone, but together a curse to each other.

The peculiar sting the man finds in this dream may be due to his masculine supposition that love for a woman should be altogether spontaneous and primitive, devoid of any disturbing element of conscious adjustment or intellectual culture, such as he suspects has entered ominously into their relations.

IV. She dreams still more whimsically, but pathetically, now, of lying in her own grave, seeing the slab above it, aware that her lover, ever a cold and exacting critic rather than a lover, is coming again to judge her. Suddenly she sees that he is weeping, desiring her just as she was, faults and all. How can this change have been wrought? Regarding her tombstone more attentively, she reads her own name there, and understands. So she has been dead ever since the lettering was fresh, and one stab of scorn killed her. If ghosts had leave to point a moral!

The reader is likely to be glad to remember that this is a shrewd dream, and to hope that by means of it some happier fate befell this pair than their companions of Meredith's "Modern Love."

Inapprehensiveness. Two friends at twilight gazing towards the ruined tower at Asolo, standing out against the sunset, discuss a weed growth branching out from the wall. The woman, intent upon their superficial intercourse upon wall-growths, is quite unwitting, while she spends her whole gaze on the distant view, that one look of hers on the man beside her would set free an outburst of latent passion.

12. *Ruskin:* John, who has written on artistic aspects of out-door life in Italy.

32. *Vernon Lee:* the pen name of Violet Paget, who has written specially on Italian local and historical subjects.

Which. A slight dramatic idyl depicting an Abbé in the act of adjudging which of three court ladies clustered

about him has the best notion of love in a man. Loyalty and piety the Duchesse requires; purity and valor the Marquise; the Comtesse asks for love only, if it be in an infidel or traitor or coward. Whereupon the Abbé concludes that this is terribly like God's preference. Is it too much so?

The Cardinal and the Dog is a folk poem telling how the Pope's legate, Cardinal Crescenzio, was haunted by an avenging spirit in the shape of an enormous dog, invisible to every one else, which hounded him to death.

The poem was written in 1840, when Browning was twenty-eight, for little Willie Macready to draw pictures for; the "Pied Piper" following for the same purpose, and both themes belonging to the same class, the piper and the dog being originally impersonations of the wind and of death in popular myths. The black dog in the Christianized mythology of the middle ages was an emissary of the devil coming to claim his own, as in this legend.

1. *Crescenzio . . . at the High Council, Trent:* Marcel Crescentio, a distinguished Roman prelate, was made Bishop of Marsico, in the kingdom of Naples, by Pope Clement VII., and Cardinal in 1542 by Pope Paul III., the Pope who convened the famous Council of Trent, which held twenty-five sessions, 1545 to 1563, under Popes Julius III. and Pius IV. This council was designed as a foil to Protestantism, and Cardinal Crescentio, whom Julius III. made its presiding legate during five sessions, was particularly obnoxious to the Protestant theologians in the drafting of decrees of reform in the Church, because of his obstinate refusal to make them any concessions. Hence the legend (see line 15), which reflects the Protestant view of Crescentio. Browning's date given in line 2 is wrong; the fifteenth session of the council, the last over which Crescentio presided, ended in 1552. The popular story went that the Cardinal being ill stayed in Trent, and after working almost the whole of the night of March 20, in writing to the Pope,

as he arose from his seat he imagined that he saw a mad dog with frightful open jaws, flaming eyes, and lopping ears about to attack him. He called his servants at once, and made them bring lights; but the dog could not be found. The Cardinal, terrified by this spectre, fell into a deep melancholy, and then immediately into a sickness which made him despair of recovery, although his friends and physicians assured him that there was nothing to fear. He died at Verona the first of June, 1552.

The Pope and the Net. A humorous story of the rise of a humbly born prelate who made his humility his stock in trade, as betokened by his fisherman father's fish-net. This he had set up prominently in his hall until made successively Bishop, Cardinal, and at last Pope, when the net disappeared from sight, because, quoth the Pope, it had caught the fish.

2. *Conclave:* the assembly of cardinals which elects the Pope, called conclave from the Latin *con* and *clavis*, with a key, because the assemblies were secret.

9. *Sword and keys:* the insignia of the Pope, the sword referring to St. Peter's sword, John xviii. 10; the keys to the keys of heaven, Matthew xvi. 19.

19. *Sacred slipper:* the broidered Papal slipper with the cross worked on the toe.

The Bean-Feast. A story of Pope Sixtus V. going about in disguise to learn for himself how his people lived, and joining a poor family companionably and with relish over a dish of beans.

1. *Sixtus, that Fifth:* Felice Peretti, said to have been himself a swineherd of lowly origin, born in 1521, befriended by a monk who got him a place in a Franciscan monastery where he was educated, becoming a priest and one of the most popular preachers in Rome. He was made Cardinal in 1570, and Pope in 1585. On becoming Pope he distinguished himself both as to goodness and ability, founding the Vatican Library, adding the dome to St. Peter's, instituting reforms, seeking to discover hidden crime, and himself going about the city in

disguise, as the poem tells. Mr. Cooke cites Farnsworth's "Life" of Sixtus as giving an account of an actual occurrence resembling that described in the poem: "Another time, as he passed through the city, seeing the gates of that convent open, he suddenly got out of his chariot and went into the porter's lodge, where he found the porter, who was a lay brother, eating a platter of beans, with oil poured over them. As the meanness of the repast put him in mind of his former condition, he took a wooden spoon, and sitting down close to the porter, on a staircase, first eat one platter full with him, and then another, to the great surprise of those that were with him. After that he had thanked the lay brother for his entertainment, he turned to his attendants, and said, 'We shall live two years longer for this; for we have eat with an appetite, and without fear or suspicion.' And then lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, 'The Lord be praised for permitting a Pope, once in his life, to make a meal in peace and quietness.'"

Muckle-mouth Meg. A lively ballad describing an actual foray over the border of a young English lord, William Scott of the House of Harden (said to be an ancestor of Sir Walter Scott the novelist); his seizure by the Scotch laird, Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank; the intervention of the dame should he marry wide-mouthed Meg; his contumacy, confinement, and happy release by the misnamed Meg.

Arcades Ambo. An interchange of similar opinion between *A.*, who declares that he should not be blamed for cowardice in fight, for if he had not run away no one can be sure he might not have been killed; and *B.*, who objects to cowardice, but acknowledges that he too is afraid to meet death under some circumstances, and would save himself by making use of vivisected brute-creatures to spare himself a little pain.

Arcades ambo: Arcadians both, a phrase from Virgil's seventh Pastoral, generally used ironically, as here, of persons equally contemptible.

The Lady and the Painter. A dialogue between a lady who makes the conventional objection against hiring a model in order to paint from the nude, and a painter who declares it is far more degrading to conform with convention and wear bird-wings as she does.

Ponte dell' Angelo. A Venetian legend put in the mouth of a boatman who makes his men stop rowing while he points out the bridge and tells that it was named from the house yonder, where an extortionate but devout lawyer lived with the devil as servant, till the lawyer, to ingratiate himself with the Church, invited the Capucin abbot to dine, when this pious monk, suspecting the evil one was disguised in the lawyer's treasure of a cook, called him forth in his true colors. The devil explained that he was only biding his chance to carry the lawyer off, but that he was so constant in prayer to the Madonna that a fit time had not yet come. The abbot, seizing the opportunity for a victory for the Church, bade him avaunt by the solid wall, breaking a hole through it as a sign men might see and heed. Then joining the lawyer at dinner, the priest warned him to repent, scaring him further by wringing blood from the napkins in token of his extortion. The lawyer reformed, and begged leave to fill up the devil's breach in the wall with an image of a guardian angel. Hence the name of the bridge, concludes the boatman; and as for the story, it is told by Boverio and accredited by two witnesses.

23. *Ad rem:* to the point.

50. *Capucins:* a body of friars of a reformed order of St. Francis, established in 1525, taking their name from their hood, *capuce*, a cowl which was attached to the habit they wore.

184. *Boverio:* Zaccaria (1568–1638), an Italian Capuchin monk who wrote the annals of his order.

Beatrice Signorini. A dramatic romance telling how a clever painter, Francisco Romanelli, attracted by a beautiful woman more gifted than himself as a painter, Artemisia Genteleschi, was tempted to give himself up to

loving her truly, disregarding the masculine prerogative of acknowledged superiority, since in her case it would not be admitted. He gave this up, however, instinctively preferring the freedom and supremacy his meek and loving wife, Beatricé Signorini, as a matter of course, accorded him. He indulged himself in the congenial companionship of the brilliant woman artist, and on leaving Rome and bidding her farewell, she gave him a canvas she had painted with a frame of flowers, as a gift for his wife, the central space to be filled in by him with a portrait of her whom he loved best. He seized the chance to paint in then and there, with more than common ease and skill, Artemisia's face. Returning to his home in Viterbo, and to his fond wife, he showed her one day all the gifts and tributes prelates and princes for whom he painted had bestowed upon him. He mentally contrasts her docile admiration of him and her unsophisticated delight in these honors he had been exhibiting with Artemisia's proud-spiritedness, and insolently assuming that his despised Beatricé will accept anything at his hands, he ventures to show her the flower-framed portrait. She criticises the flowers one by one with surprising calm and adroitness, and then suddenly vents her rising indignation by stabbing and slashing out the portrait in a tempest of beautiful fierceness, reckless of the consequences, which reveals the unsuspected force of her nature, and wins her husband's love afresh and his quite new admiration.

2. *Viterbo:* a town in the Campagna forty-one miles northwest of Rome, with churches rich in works of art.

4. *Cortona:* Pietro Berretini (1596–1669), called Pietro da Cortona, painter and architect, decorator of the Barberini and Pitti palaces.

12. *Francesco Romanelli:* (1617–1662) born at Viterbo, a successful painter, of the school of Cortona, later of the more graceful and supple school of Bernini of Naples, patronized by Cardinal Barberini and Louis XIV. of France, but having more talent than genius. Baldinucci

describes him as "of a gay and lively temperament, very susceptible and of an amorous disposition, fond of all pleasures such as dancing, games, and the society of the opposite sex." His marriage with Beatricé Signorini, a noble and beautiful lady, was favored by Barberini himself, who blessed the banns. Baldinucci praises him, saying that "no obscene picture ever issued from his brush, which was ever inimical to a public display of the nude." This was sure to be obnoxious to Browning (see "Parleying With Francis Furini"), who upheld the purity and beauty of the nude in art, and who would disagree, also, with Baldinucci's blame of Artemisia's picture of "Desire."

14. *A wonder of a woman painting too*, etc.: Artemisia Lomi or Genteleschi (1590–1642), daughter of Arazio Lomi, a painter of Pisa, both father and daughter taking the name of Genteleschi from an uncle. She was a beautiful woman and a genius, painting pictures in Florence, Rome, and other Italian cities; among these, a nude "Aurora" for the Florentine noble Arrighetti, a "Rape of Proserpine," and a life-size "Judith and Holofernes," these two now being in the Pitti Palace. Of the latter Lanzi says that the coloring is strong and the picture "of a tone and perspicuity that inspire awe." She visited England with her father in her youth, where she painted portraits of the family of Charles I., her own portrait by herself being now at Hampton Court. Of the picture Browning praises, Baldinucci's "prim record" says: she painted this "beautiful picture of a nude woman entitled 'Desire' for Michelangelo the younger, in commemoration of the glorious achievements of his ancestor, the great Buonarroti: but Lionardo, his nephew and heir, a gentleman of great modesty and decorum, known for his refinement, piety, and all other good qualities, wished this figure draped, and Baldassare Volterrano complied, without in any way lessening the beauty of the picture."

111. *Acromion:* the outer extremity of the shoulder-blade.

118. *Motors, flexors:* muscles, drawn in a way that Tito and Titian would criticise.

119. *Ser Santi:* Santi di Titi or Tito, Tuscan painter (1538–1603), nicknamed, as Browning says, by his contemporary Titian. He was as remarkable for his drawing and perspective as Titian (1480–1576) for his color.

159. *You paint the human figure I make shift*, etc.: Artemisia, since she especially painted nude figures, which Romanelli abjured, is of course made here by Browning to show the adroitness of a woman or a superior in not thrusting forward gifts of her own which might seem to compete with his in a present of this nature, but to keep them in abeyance.

161. *What I fain would paint is — flowers:* according to Baldinucci, it was fruit not flowers, as Browning has evidently chosen to give it, in which Artemisia excelled. Baldinucci says: "Besides portrait painting, Artemisia had great talent for reproducing every kind of fruit, imitating nature in a marvellous fashion."

251. *Calypso's all-unwilling guest to his Penelope:* Ulysses tells his wife Penelope his adventures ("Odyssey," xxiii. 405–411), and how he was detained by Calypso unwillingly. See also "Odyssey," v. 69–292.

307. *The spilla:* the large pin worn in the hair by Italian women.

350. *One culls from out the heaped laudations*, etc.: in Baldinucci's praise of Romanelli the "pretty incident" is told thus: He became deeply attached to the painter Artemisia, and often visited her in order to watch her working at her art, and to converse with her about art and the topics of the day. As she was at the height of her art in fruit painting at that time, he desired her to paint a picture filled with fruit, and to leave in the centre space enough for a portrait. Artemisia complied with this request, and made a charming picture, embellished by fruits. Romanelli placed in the centre a most lifelike and lovely portrait of Artemisia. This picture he kept

himself, and he placed more value on it than on all the presents he had received from prelates and princes while in Rome. It was accordingly hung in his own house among his other pictures. One day he called his wife's attention to it, pointed out the portrait of Artemisia, and remarked upon the beauty and the ingenuity displayed in the conception of the picture. He purposely praised all the virtues of Artemisia, her charming manner, her vivacity of speech, and her lively repartee. This he did in order to excite the jealousy of his wife, who was also a very beautiful woman. The latter took occasion, when her husband was out of the house, to pierce and entirely destroy the face of Artemisia with a spilla, so that it could not be recognized. Romanelli, instead of showing anger at this proceeding, was more in love with his wife than ever, and from that time ceased to praise or make mention of the picture, which still is in possession of some of Romanelli's heirs."

Flute-music, with an Accompaniment. A light dialogue, itself well described as flute-music, between a man and woman who are talking about the music they hear wafted over the ash tree-tops from some unseen player. The man fancies that the music proceeds from an unusual passion of love passing in expression through moods of assurance, trust, content, sorrow, hope returning, reverie and so on. The woman retorts that this is all created by his own fancy, the fact being that he hears only a poor clerk who after drudging at his book-keeping until noon, passes his recess in practising flute-exercises. The man rallies her for undeceiving him, and accuses her of depreciating simplicity, to which she rejoins that she has heard it all too often before to be impressed or deluded, and that it is the ash-tops that have worked the charm with him, whereupon he maintains significantly that such warning of ill below the surface, like distrust of expressions of love, was ever irksome to him; fancy, the mind's "ash-tops," so to speak, demands its own way.

8. *Secrets:* used as a verb.

63. *Quid petis:* what do you seek?

82. *Legato:* with sustained tone.

84. *Staccato:* with detached tone.

106. *Gounod:* Charles (1818–1895), musical composer, among whose operas was a "Romeo and Juliet."

132. *Caldamente:* with warmth.

135. *Syncopation:* notes struck against the beat, regularly breaking the rhythm.

169. *Aquarius:* the water-carrier, one of the constellations of the zodiac, presiding over the rainy season.

"Imperante Augusto Natus est —" A dramatic bit conveying along with the especial incident related a vivid sense of the human atmosphere of the world when Cæsarism was dominant and the dawn of Christianity, as yet unknown, was imminent. In it a Roman tells another Roman at the Baths, while they are waiting for the water to warm, of an incident of the day before that vaguely terrified him. Where they are now sitting there was scarcely standing-room then, when Varius read his panegyric on the Emperor. The speaker was himself relieved to leave the throng at the close of the poem. With his head full of the idea of the Emperor's glory, of which the temples and buildings at every turn remind him, musing on the greatness of Rome over which Cæsar is supreme, he runs across a beggar, and contrasts with his abjectness the height of the Emperor. He tosses him a coin, and recognizes — Augustus! Recalling the rumor that once a year, to disarm Fortune, the Emperor plays the beggar, the awestruck speaker reminds his companion how in triumphs, when the conqueror is riding in his chariot to the summit of the Capitol with crown held above his head, his attendant points with his other hand to the malefactor's cross. Even the gods are not safe, he moralizes. Jupiter dethroned Saturn, and may be dethroned. Perhaps the sibyl's prophecy of one born in Judæa to master Augustus and the world is not altogether empty. With the next breath he berates and orders about the bath-slave.

"*Imperante Augusto Natus est* —": he was born in the reign of Augustus (Augustus reigning), the reference being to Christ, whose birth was said to be foretold by a sibyl. See line **157** in the poem, and note on same.

8. *Lucius Varius Rufus:* (64 B. C.–9 A. D.) chief epic poet of his day in Rome, his popularity originating with an epic poem he wrote on the death of Julius Cæsar. His tragedy "Thyestes" Quintilian considered equal to the great Greek tragedies. It was acted after the battle of Actium for the triumph of Octavius Cæsar, and the poet received a million sesterces for it. None of his work is extant except two lines of this Panegyric on Augustus, which are quoted by Horace in his first Epistle, and Varius is now known chiefly, with Plotius Lucca, as the editor of Virgil's "Æneid."

10. *The Emperor:* Caius Octavius, nephew and adopted son of Julius Cæsar, whose mother, Atia, the sister of Julius, laid the foundation of his eminence by her unusual care over his education. He was studying in Greece, with the philosopher Athenodorus, when the death of Julius called him to the rule of Rome, which he undertook, suppressing all opposition, as triumvir with Antony and Lepidus. After his defeat of Antony at Actium, he became Emperor Augustus Cæsar, 2 B. C., and pursued unremittingly until his death, A. D. 14, an encouragement of letters, education, public buildings, public games, shows, and donations which both distinguished Rome, and established himself as ruler of the world. Browning compresses into this short poem mention of his chief distinctions. The temple of Apollo Palatine (37) was, above all, a temple of letters, having a colonnade with double rows of pillars adorned with pictures and statues, open below, but above including a public library, with halls for public orations and literary discussions, schools for teaching, and withdrawing-rooms for private reading, the whole surrounded by grounds with covered porticos and shaded walks.

11. *Little Flaccus:* Horace, Horatius Flaccus (65 B. C. –

8 B. C.), writer of the famous Odes, also of Epodes, Satires, and Epistles. Befriended by Virgil, who introduced him to Mæcenas.

12. *Epos:* heroic poem.

15. *Etruscan kings:* Etruria, north of ancient Latium, elected its kings for life, and the families of the more modern Roman nation were proud to trace their lines back to Etrurian ancestors.

16. *Mæcenas:* the patron of Horace and other Roman men of letters, whose name is a synonym for wealth, was a second Augustus, practically the Emperor's prime minister, a lover of learning, and himself a minor poet.

17. *Quadrans:* a Roman coin worth a half-cent. — *Thermæ:* public warm baths.

69. *The earth-upholding Mount:* Mount Atlas, in North Africa, where the giant Atlas was fabled to stand holding the earth on his shoulders. The geography of the world as known to the Romans is outlined, lines 66-69.

104. *Suburra:* a street of ill-fame in Rome.

109. *Quæstor — nay, Ædile, Censor:* imperial offices, each of more importance than the preceding. — *Pol:* Pollux, the twin of Castor, both names to swear by.

113. *Quarter-as:* a quarter of an *as*, which was worth less than a cent.

155. *Ancient dismal tales*, etc.: according to Hesiod, after Chaos Cronus ruled, who was succeeded by Saturn, and he by Zeus or the Roman Jupiter.

157. *The gray Sibyl*, etc.: Augustus was said by Suidas of the twelfth century to have consulted the oracles at Delphos to learn who should succeed him, and was told that a Judæan child was his lord and enemy. To the sibyl Tiburtina this answer was attributed; and, according to St. Augustine, the Erythrean Sibyl, and, according to others, the Cumæan Sibyl originated the pagan tradition of a boy who should come at this time to rule the world. Virgil, in his fourth pastoral, is supposed to refer to the same prophecy. After receiving this oracle, Augustus is said to have built, in sign of it,

on the Capitoline Hill, an altar with the inscription, "Ara Primogeniti Dei," the Church of Ara Cœli being erected later on the site of it; and in a rude bas-relief, still preserved in this church and said to be very old, the Emperor is represented on his knees before the Madonna and Child, with the sibyl Tiburtina by his side pointing him upwards.

163. *Strigils:* flesh-brushes. — *Oil-drippers:* instruments for dropping oil; the Romans, like the Greeks, using oil on the skin after the bath.

Development describes the progress of a child's knowledge of the "Iliad" and Homer, from the first inkling of what the siege of Troy was, as it was presented to him by his father in an impromptu game, to the last result of critical scholarship upon the Homeric writings, or to the finished fruit of the Greek intellect represented in Aristotle's "Ethics," which he can only appreciate when his mind is ripe; the whole process implying the use of illusion, and the gradual strengthening of the capacity to penetrate beyond appearance.

38. *Pope:* Alexander Pope's translation of the "Iliad" of Homer, the first four books of which were published 1715, the whole completed 1720.

40. *My Primer:* the primer, or first book, in Greek.

43. *Buttmann:* the "Greek Grammar" of the distinguished German philologist, Philip Karl Buttmann (1764–1829), secretary of the Royal Library at Berlin, famed for his "Ausführliche Griechische Sprachlehre," "Lexilogus oder Beiträge zur Griechischen Worterklärung," and editions of Plato and Demosthenes.

46. *Heine:* or Heyne, the standard Greek text of Homer.

58. *Hymns:* the Homeric Hymns or Preludes of various early origin; the hymn to Apollo the oldest, attributed to Homer by Thucydides (iii. 104). The hymn to Demeter was discovered in MS. at Moscow during the last century.

59. "*Battle of the Frogs and Mice*": a burlesque epic attributed to Homer, translated by Chapman.

60. "*Margites*": a Comic poem, called Margites from its hero Margós, who "knew many arts, and knew them all badly."

64. *Wolf:* Friedrich August (1759–1824), professor of philology at Halle University for twenty-three years. His "Prolegomena in Homerum" argued that the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" were not the work of one single and individual Homer, but a much later compilation of pieces sung by various minstrels and handed down by oral tradition.

88. *Nonage:* youth, non-age.

100. *Loathe, like Peleus' son, a lie:* see "Iliad," bk. i., describing the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, Peleus' son, who resented the chief's breach of agreement, his resentment being the occasion of the plot of the poem.

101. *Love my wedded wife, like Hector:* see "Iliad," bk. vi., which tells of Hector's farewell to his wife, Andromache.

106. "*Ethics*": Aristotle's great work on ethics.

113. *The Stagirite:* a name given to Aristotle (384–322 B. C.), from his birthplace, Stagîros.

Rephan. A dweller on another planet called Rephan tells the world-weary of the earth, how the very perfection of Rephan, where all things were merged in a neutral best, mysteriously awoke in him a yearning for imperfection, change, growth, a want of worth in all things which would startle him up to an Infinite below and above him, and through pain, doubt, and death elicit finally, as on earth, a better life. He was therefore told that he was past Rephan, his sphere was Earth.

Jane Taylor, of Ongar, not Norwich, to whom Browning attributes his suggestion for "Rephan" (1783–1824), wrote "Hymns for Infant Minds," among which were the perennial "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and "My Mother," a novel, and among "The Contributions of Q. Q.," a sketch in prose called "How it Strikes a Stranger," which probably not only

suggested this poem, as he says, to Browning, but also his title for "How it Strikes a Contemporary."

Reverie. A lyrical expression of the faith that Power and Love, which are shown to be at strife both within man and in the outer world, for the sake of eliciting, through the mind of man, all his powers and perceptions, and his faith in an Infinite internally revealed, shall one day prove to be in essence one and the same.

Epilogue deprecates the thought that those who love the poet should pity him in death, and so mistake the whole tenor of his life with its strenuous hopefulness in the face of all difficulties, and its joyous faith in a future of soul development.

Fugitive Poems.

Sonnet. This early sonnet, written for Mr. W. J. Fox's magazine, *The Monthly Repository*, 1834, is a rare specimen in Browning of a poetic form to which he does not recur till about fifty years later in the Goldoni sonnet (p. 274), and "Helen's Tower" (p. 275), written for occasions, and in the light half-burlesquing "Rawdon Brown" (p. 276). It might appear that he shared Landor's good-natured contempt for sonneteering.

Ben Karshook's Wisdom was printed first in Miss Powers' annual, *The Keepsake*. It was written in 1854, and apparently is referred to in "One Word More," stanza xiv., "Karshook, Cleon, Norbert, and the Fifty." Karshook, in "The Return of the Druses," would not be thought of here; and the poet might have been thinking of Karshish, to which he altered "Karshook" first in the Tauchnitz edition of his works, published in 1872, and after that in all editions; but the mistake may betray his original intention to include this Talmudic bit with his "Men and Women."

2. *Karshook:* thistle, in Hebrew.

17. *Hiram's-Hammer:* 1 Kings vii. 13–22.

O Love! Love! This lyric was translated from the

"Hippolytus" of Euripides, the drama which had suggested the unfinished "Artemis Prologizes," and printed by J. P. Mahaffy in his "Euripides," p. 116, London: 1879; Mr. Mahaffy explaining: "Mr. Browning has honored me with the following translation of these stanzas, so that the general reader may not miss the meaning or the spirit of the ode. The English metre, though not a strict reproduction, gives an excellent idea of the original."

The Blind Man to the Maiden. Translated from a German poem in Wilhelmine von Hillern's "The Hour will Come" (p. 174, London: 1879), for Mrs. Clara Bell, who appended a note saying that the English version was done by a friend. In a private letter Browning writes: "I did indeed translate that little song for Mrs. Bell, never dreaming anybody would suppose there was 'another hand' in her work. See now! I should have thought it very mean had I told anybody 'that 's mine!' and she herself unnecessarily tells it,— from sheer honesty, I have no doubt, on somebody observing, 'what, you versify?'"

Album Lines. These verses, in which Browning is caught in explaining away a misinterpretation of his "Touch him ne'er so lightly," were written in Miss Edith Longfellow's album when the daughter of the American poet was in Venice.

Goldoni. Written for the Album of the Committee undertaking to erect in Venice, in 1883, a monument to Goldoni.

Goldoni: Charles (1707–1793), the Venetian dramatist.

Impromptu. The painter Felix Moscheles, in speaking with Browning one day of the oddities and susceptibilities of musical artists, said that Horace had hit them off well in his lines: —

> "Omnibus hoc vitium est cantoribus, inter amicos
> Ut nunquam inducant animum cantare rogati;
> Injussi, nunquam desistant."

He always meant to have the lines written out and put on his piano. Could Browning tell him of a good translation? Browning answered by giving him this version of them.

Helen's Tower. Tennyson and Browning were asked by the Earl of Dufferin to write some lines on his Helen's Tower, which on attaining his twenty-first year he had erected in memory of his mother, Helen, Countess of Gifford, on a rock on his estate at Clandeboye, Ireland.

2. *The Scæan Gate:* Iliad, iii. 190.

14. *The morning-stars together sang:* Job xxxviii. 4, 7. Dante, "Inferno," i. 36.

Rawdon Brown. Written for Browning's friend Mrs. Bronson at her request, upon an Englishman well known in Venice, and who knew Venice well. He is said to have gone there for a short visit and stayed forty years, never being able to tear himself away for long, and finally dying there in 1883.

Tutti ga i so gusti, etc.: Everybody follows his taste, and I follow mine.

3. *Anglus Brown am I, although my heart's Venetian:* the inscription on his tomb.

10. *Toni:* Brown's gondolier and attendant.

12. *Bella Venezia*, etc.: Beautiful Venice, nevermore shall I leave you.

The Names. This sonnet, contrasting the potency mixed with love associated with Shakespeare's name, as representing the utmost of finite creative might, with the unmixed awe associated with the name of the Infinite Creator, is based upon the fact that the Hebrews regard the Sacred Name as unspeakable, substituting Adonai for Jahwé in reading. It was written for the book of the Shakespearian Show, held in London, May 29–31, 1884, to pay off the debt on the Woman's Hospital.

The Founder of the Feast. Written in an album which was presented to Mr. Arthur Chappell in recognition of the Popular Concerts which he had given to the public in St. James's Hall, London, on Saturdays and Mondays.

Why I am a Liberal. Written in answer to the question, Why am I a Liberal? and published, together with other replies from English men of letters, in a volume edited by Andrew Reid in 1885.

Jubilee Memorial Lines. Written at the request of the parishioners of St. Margaret's Church for a window put into that church in commemoration of the Jubilee anniversary, — a window representing Queen Victoria, at full length, bearing an orb and sceptre, in the central panel, with smaller scenes depicting her coronation, and decorated further with the arms of the Colonies of England. Browning's verses are notably impersonal, and unpatriotic in the sectional sense of that word.

Epitaph on Levi Lincoln Thaxter. Written for the boulder, which now bears these lines, above the grave of one of Browning's first American appreciators, who was born in Watertown, a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts, Feb. 1, 1824, and died May 31, 1884.

To Edward Fitzgerald. In the "Life and Letters of Edward Fitzgerald," edited by Aldis Wright, a passage — inadvertently passed by the editor, to his great regret, as afterwards expressed — caught Browning's eye and elicited this indignant rejoinder, hot with an esteem for Elizabeth Barrett Browning which had neither slumbered nor slept since her death twenty-eight years before: "Mrs. Browning's death is rather a relief to me, I must say: no more Aurora Leighs, thank God! A woman of real genius, I know; but what is the upshot of it all! She and her sex had better mind the kitchen and the children; and perhaps the poor. Except in such things as little novels, they only devote themselves to what men do much better, leaving that which men do worse or not at all."

Prose Pieces.

Introductory Essay for "Letters of Shelley." Written for a volume of letters by Shelley, at the request of the publisher, Mr. Moxon, which he published, and afterwards

suppressed as far as possible, because the letters were discovered to be spurious. For this reason this piece of prose is rare. It has been reprinted by the London Browning, and also, later, by the Shelley Society, for the members of those societies, and has not been otherwise reprinted except in the "Cambridge Browning," where, unfortunately, it is marred by a number of misprints. Merely as a rarity this essay is of note. As to its value otherwise, Mr. W. Tyas Harden, who edited it for the Shelley Society, has said: "If the letters were spurious and worthless, the essay was genuine and most valuable. It was surely by some occult and happy inspiration that the writer treated his subject both broadly and deeply, not toying with the handful of letters, but passing to their supposed author, and taking the opportunity to analyze his genius and to vindicate his character. So ably was this done, with such keen appreciation of intellectual qualities and such generous discernment of moral probabilities, that the essay must always remain essential alike to the students of Browning and of Shelley."

Introduction to "The Divine Order." While by no means of the intrinsic value of the Shelley Introduction, this prose piece is included here for completeness' sake, and as an example of Browning's interest in eloquence and in artistic expression of all genuine kinds. The allusion to the phrase *sermocinando ultra clepsydram* is an echo from Dr. Bottinius, Pompilia's advocate of "The Ring and the Book" (see this edition, Vol. II. ix. 213).

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